ENCOUNTER

CURRENT AFFAIRS – LITERATURE – THE ARTS

SEPTEMBER/OCTOBER 1987

£1.50

THATCHER'S VICTORY
Anthony Hartley

VICTOR HUGO'S DEFEATS
Renee Winegarten

GORBACHOV, SOBERLY
Jean-François Revel

Roger Owen: GETTING BETTER?

Richard Deveson: SHORT STORY

Herbert London: AMERICAN REPORT-CARD

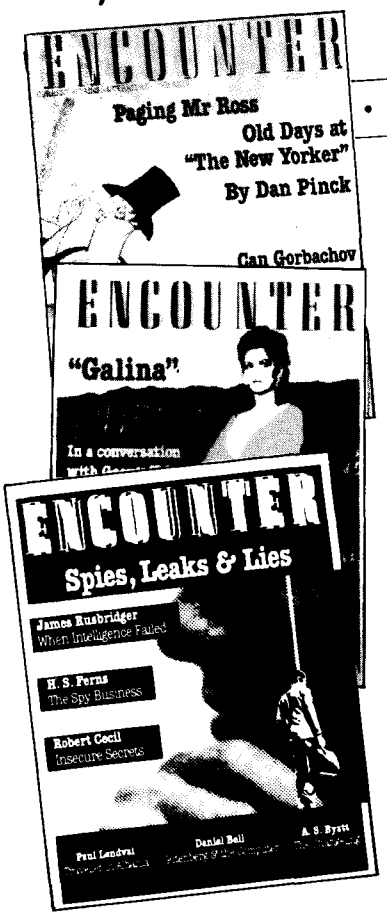
Sue Vice, John Aiken: MALCOLM LOWRY

and Richard Mayne: AGAINST MEDIOCRITY

PRODUCED 2005 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Malcolm Bradbury, Michael Foot, Henry Kissinger, Cecil Parkinson, Jeane Kirkpatrick, Helmut Schmidt, Rupert Murdoch, Duke of Devonshire, Yehudi Menuhin, John Cleese, Seamus Heaney, Milton Friedman, Mary Kenny, Alexander Chancellor, George Will, Bernard Levin, Michael Heseltine, Max Kampelman, Tom Stoppard, Milovan Djilas, Claus Von Bulow, Paul Nitze, Daniel Moynihan, William F. Buckley, Susan Sontag, Ian McGregor, Jeffrey Archer, Anthony Thwaite, Kingsley Amis, Gavin Lyall, Lord Carrington, Arnold Beichman, David Frost, Leo Rosten, Zbigniew Brzezinski, Leon Levy, Leszek Kolakowski, Melvin Bragg, Noel Annan, William Boyd, Robert Elegant, Max Beloff, Harold Lever, Anthony Burgess, David Owen, John O'Sullivan, Brian Redhead, Nikolai Tolstoy, Irving Kristol, Bruno Bettelheim, Conrad Black, Ron Burr, Edward Teller, Eric Rhode, David Pryce-Jones, James Goldsmith, Graham Greene, Octavio Paz, Michael Caine, William Simon, Donald Regan, Gerald Ronson, Andrew Knight, Studs Terkel, Walter Rostow, Peter Parker, David Hockney, Paul Volcker, Lord Bauer, Frank Shakespeare, Roy Jenkins, Harvey Tyson, Auberon Waugh,

Send £13.50 for the same reasons they do



• • EXTRA SPECIAL DECEMBER NUMBER CELEBRATING 400th ISSUE • • • • •

What is it about Encounter, the monthly magazine, that persuades these people, along with many thousands of others, to write personal cheques for another year's subscription?

Is it the unparalleled standard of wit, the literary and political distinction, the unique coverage of major issues, or because Encounter is as open-minded, as animated, and as brilliantly bitchy as a successful literary cocktail party?

£13.50 a year doesn't seem like much to find out.
Join them by joining us today.

The cost of a 25% reduced subscription is £13.50, US $29.25, £14.25 overseas. If you can only pay separately by money order or bank transfer, please give details of the arrangements you have made. A receipt will not be sent unless requested. For payments by American Express please fill in your account number and sign.

25% OFF

Total payment £..... Name .....

Address .....

.....Signature.....

To: Encounter, 44 Great Windmill Street, London W1V 7PA. Tel:(01) 434 3063

PRODUCED 2005 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

EDITORS
Melvin J. Lasky
and Richard Mayne

EXECUTIVE PUBLISHER
Anthony Robinson

ASSISTANT EDITOR
Bryan Healing

EDITORIAL CONSULTANTS
Margot Walmsley
J. C. Hall

ADVERTISEMENT DIRECTOR
Antony Pullen

PUBLISHERS' ADVERTISING
Sarah Clifford-Jones

ASSISTANT TO THE PUBLISHER
Janice Ward

EDITORIAL ASSISTANT
Jacqui Lewis

CIRCULATION MANAGER
Pat Savage

CHIEF ACCOUNTANT
Pat Shutler

ACCOUNTS ASSISTANT
Shirley Lewis

ADVISORY BOARD
Maurice Cranston
D. J. Enright
Anthony Hartley
Leo Labedz
Edward Shils
Anthony Thwaite
George Urban
John Weightman

PUBLISHING ADVISERS
Lord Ardwick
Blouke Carus
Lord Cudlipp
Leon Levy
Julio Nunez
Julia Robinson
Jack Watmough
Gary Bogard (chairman)

COVER
David Costa

ENCOUNTER

SEPTEMBER-OCTOBER 1987 VOL. LXIX No. 3 ISSN 0013-7073

CONTENTS

The Remoulding of British Politics	*Anthony Hartley*	3
Struth (*story*)	*Richard Deveson*	11
Getting Better	*Roger Owen*	15
Column	*M*	22

POEMS

David Galler 10, Felicity Napier 14, Graeme Wilson 20, Lotte Kramer 21, Matt Simpson 24, Julie Whitby 44, Patrick Garland 64, John Loveday 65, Sue Hubbard 76

MEN & IDEAS

Victor Hugo	*Renee Winegarten*	25

NOTES & TOPICS

The Hunting of the Snark	*Max Beloff*	36
Malcolm Lowry	*John Aiken*	38
Letter from Valencia	*Walter Haubrich*	39
Paris Notebook	*Jean-François Revel*	41

BOOKS & WRITERS

Narrator Dethroned	*Sue Vice*	46
Left Rethinking	*Alan Ryan*	52
Books from "El Boom"	*Kate Duchêne*	56
Books Encountered	*R.M.*	61

DOCUMENT

An Editor Preaches "Revolution"	*"Samizdat" from Moscow*	62

DISCUSSION

An American Report-Card	*Herbert London*	66

MEMOIR

Charles Allberry & Roy Calvert	*S. Gorley Putt*	70

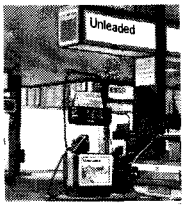
BOXES

"Horny-Handed Sons of Toil. . . ." (*Daily Telegraph/Standard*) 5, The Politics of the Post-Socialist Era (*Peter Jenkins*) 6, Art, Glory & Power (*Norman St John Stevas*) 9, Hugo in New York . . . (*Ron Alexander*) 34, Interesting (*Stephen Spender*) 40, "Dinosaurs" (*Harry Eyres*) 41, "Full Stops & Capital Letters" (*John Clare*) 68

AUTHORS 69 — LETTERS 77 — LIFE & LETTERS 81

© 1987 by Encounter Ltd. *Ten issues a year (July-August and September-October are single issues). Per copy: UK £1.50: USA $3.50. Back numbers £2.25 ($5.00). Postage/packaging: 50p ($1.00). Annual subscriptions: UK £18.00: USA & Canada $39.00 air-freight: India £20.00 by air. Elsewhere £19.00. Address for all departments: Encounter Ltd., 44 Great Windmill Street, London W1V 7PA (01-434 3063): UK Trade Distributors: Cutlerglen, 13 Newington Industrial Estate, Crampton Street, London SE17 3AZ (01-708 1308). Second-class postage paid at Rahway, NJ. US Postmaster: send address corrections to Encounter, c/o Mercury Airfreight International Ltd Inc., 10B Engelhard Avenue, Avenel, NJ 07001. Manuscripts are returned only if accompanied by s.a.e.*

PHOTOCOPYING PROHIBITED



In the recent Budget, the duty on unleaded petrol was reduced – so now it's no more expensive than leaded petrol.

"What's it to do with me?" you may ask. "My car can't run on it."

Well, it may interest you to know that already many cars can run on unleaded petrol, and the number is increasing daily. In fact, very soon all new cars will be designed to run on unleaded.

Along with our EEC partners, the UK has agreed that unleaded petrol should be made widely available by October 1989.

And in this 1987 European Year of the Environment, Esso is taking firm steps to help achieve this goal.

In fact, since mid-1986 we have already introduced a national network of over 100 strategically chosen sites selling Esso Unleaded.

LEAPING FORWARD WITH UNLEADED.

For motorists, the changeover will probably raise more questions than answers, which is why we've produced this page.

Alternatively, pick up the Esso Unleaded leaflets, including our Service Station Site Directory, at your nearest Esso Station.

We hope you will find them helpful.

1 Q What is unleaded petrol?
A *It is petrol to which no lead has been deliberately added.*

2 Q Why is lead added to petrol?
A *Small quantities of lead compounds can be added to petrol to increase its octane number. This allows the use of higher compression ratio engines with more ignition spark advance, which means improved engine efficiency and fuel economy. To replace lead we have to introduce more high octane compounds to compensate.*

3 Q What is 'low lead' petrol compared to unleaded?
A *Low lead refers to the normal leaded petrol which is currently available. This is because the lead content was reduced in all petrol to 0.15g per litre on 1st January 1986 from its previous level of 0.40g per litre, in line with British Standard 4040. Unleaded petrol is allowed to contain up to 0.013g per litre which is why it cannot be called 'lead free', although on the Continent this term may be used where unleaded cannot be translated.*

4 Q Can I use unleaded petrol in my car?
A *The majority of cars in the United Kingdom have been designed to run on leaded petrol. However, nearly 40% of post-1985 petrol cars are now capable of running on unleaded fuel, although most will need some minor adjustments to allow this. Eventually all new petrol cars will incorporate the necessary modifications for them to run on unleaded. Before attempting to use unleaded petrol you should check first with your car dealer or motor manufacturer.*

5 Q What is a catalytic converter?
A *Although not legally required in the UK at present, a catalytic converter is a device that can be fitted to the exhaust system. When the exhaust fumes pass through the converter, emissions such as nitrogen oxide and carbon monoxide are burnt up or oxidised. Unfortunately, lead damages the catalysts, so they are only effective on cars already using unleaded petrol.*

6 Q Where can I buy unleaded petrol?
A *Esso were the first company in the UK to put unleaded on sale. And since then we have been increasing the number of our service stations that sell unleaded petrol. We now have more stations selling unleaded than all our competitors put together. For details of where you can buy Esso Unleaded please pick up a FREE copy of our latest site directory from any Esso station.*

7 Q How will I know which pump dispenses unleaded petrol?
A *Esso Unleaded pumps are clearly marked UNLEADED and will usually have a small pump nozzle and identification cover marked UNLEADED on the nozzle.*

8 Q What happens if I inadvertently put the wrong fuel in my car?
A *Given the safeguards mentioned above it would be very difficult for you to do so. However, an isolated incident may not be too serious. Unleaded petrol used in an engine designed to take leaded, or leaded petrol used in an unleaded engine, could eventually cause damage to the engine.*

9 Q What about other petrol fuelled equipment, like my lawn mower and chain saw?
A *Some will operate successfully on unleaded. However, you should check with the manufacturer or dealer for specific advice and follow their recommendations.*

10 Q For how long will leaded petrol continue to be available?
A *Unleaded petrol will be phased in over a number of years. Therefore both leaded and unleaded will be available for a transition period which will be as long as the present product is required to supply today's cars.*

11 Q What happens if I take my car to the Continent?
A *Both leaded and unleaded petrol are available in Europe. There may be slight differences in unleaded to take account of local conditions, but this is unlikely to affect a car that can run on unleaded petrol.*

Esso

Quality at work for Britain.

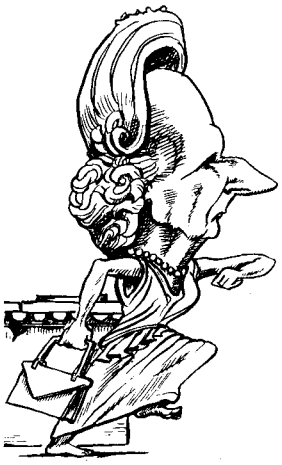
A MEMBER OF THE EXXON GROUP

PRODUCED BY HTTP://WWW.ERA.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Anthony Hartley

The Remoulding of British Politics

What Mrs Thatcher Did



DAVID OWEN was right. The result of the 1987 election is more significant than that of 1983[1]—a more crushing defeat for the Opposition parties, a more propitious event for the Conservatives. Mrs Thatcher has done it again, winning a third victory unparalleled in British 20th-century politics, but she has done it in normal circumstances without the help of the "Falkland" (or Michael Foot) Factors. She is back with a majority that is bigger than that of 1979 and only a little way behind the *annus mirabilis* of 1983. In the South and East Anglia the Conservatives hung on to their massive gains of that year and improved their position in London and the Midlands. Only in Scotland, Wales, and the North and North-East of England did they suffer notable losses. The blue sea below the Trent is beginning to look like a permanent feature of British electoral geography.

There are no special circumstances to be pleaded as an excuse for the Opposition parties. Nor can the result be set down to incompetence on their part, though the Alliance did suffer from an appallingly mistaken strategy (to which I will return in a moment). But the Labour Party fought a campaign of such apparent verve and energy that many of those concerned, including Neil Kinnock himself, believed that they had carried the day. That hope disappeared with the fairy gold of the BBC election-day exit-poll, though there were still those who could write that Labour had "won" the campaign long after it had lost it.

Beginning with a television programme, in which Mr and Mrs Kinnock appeared hand-in-hand in a modernised version of *How Green was My Valley*, and continuing with "events" dominated by an increasingly hoarse leader's oratory, the public relations operation went with a bang from start to finish. It was Kinnock, Kinnock all the way. The famous electoral broadcast (repeated by "popular demand") did not even mention the Labour Party, ending with the single word KINNOCK, as it might be BOND or KOJAK. The Left remained tranquillised until the last vote had been cast (when they promptly began to come to); and neither front-bench colleagues nor even Party policies were allowed to interrupt the leader's monologue to the voters.

This concentration on the personal qualities of Neil Kinnock may be the explanation of why this skilfully sentimental presentation ultimately failed to achieve its objective. The Labour campaign carried us to a sort of Welsh empyrean, where hill-walking and *Land of Our Fathers* were somehow or other mingled with the jollities of Rugby football. Mr Kinnock comes from one of the more politically old-fashioned areas of Britain—the valleys of South Wales—and his campaign was designed to evoke the totems of the Labour Party's past. Words like "compassion" and "caring" fitted in very well with this Nye-in-the-sky approach. Earthier matters such as Defence and the conduct of the British economy did not. Voters might be left believing that the Kinnock family were "nice folks", but, as the last-minute confusion over taxation (higher? lower?) showed, they got remarkably little idea of what Labour would do once in office. Above the rosy clouds they liked Mr Kinnock; on earth they chose Mrs Thatcher. Is niceness, after all, the first quality one looks for in a Prime Minister?

As for the Alliance, a loss of three points on 1983 only represents disaster if compared to the exaggerated expectations beforehand. The subsequent free-for-all seems to be the result of snapping nerves and thwarted ambitions. None the less, the Alliance's errors in strategy during the campaign did expose the difficulties and contradictions of its position in

THIS IS THE FIRST *of a series of articles assessing the state of British politics after the third successive victory of a Thatcher Government in June this year.*

ANTHONY HARTLEY *is the author of "The State of England" and "Gaullism: The Rise and Fall of a Political Movement". He was editor of the monthly "Interplay" in New York and has served as a political analyst for many British papers, including "The Guardian", "The Economist", and "The Sunday Telegraph".*

A second article in this series—George Watson's "The Conservative Contradiction"—will be published next month.

[1] See my article, "The Collapse of a Broad Church", ENCOUNTER, September-October 1983.

PRODUCED 2005 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

British politics as well as foreshadowing the subsequent rift between David Steel and David Owen.

For, as Brian Walden has pointed out, the long-term aim of the Alliance (and especially of the Social Democratic Party) must be to replace the Labour Party as the main party of opposition to the Conservatives. Without this ambition it is nothing. Not to recognise this fact, to bury it under vain chatter about coalition between Liberals and Labour, is to abandon any hope of "breaking the mould" of British politics. Apart from some Liberal unilateralists, the main cleavage in the political landscape still runs between the Alliance and Labour. This is particularly true of economic policy. Final success for the Alliance would spell extinction for the Labour Party just as victory at the polls for Neil Kinnock would have been far worse for "the two Davids" than Mrs Thatcher's hat-trick. It was, therefore, an extraordinary mistake to concentrate the Alliance's fire on the Conservatives during the first week of campaigning. The policy was changed, but by then it was too late. Perhaps, however, the Alliance's failure was prepared nine months earlier by the Liberal Assembly's vote against nuclear weapons and the consequent open and embarrassing split with the SDP on defence policy.[2]

CAMPAIGN STRATEGY and tactics, however, provide no sufficient reason for the magnitude of the victory. No one can now dispute the structural changes brought about by Mrs Thatcher in British politics, or close their eyes to "the Thatcherite revolution". It is clear that the sociological basis of politics has changed, and that behind the altered electoral map lies a profound transformation of British society. Mrs Thatcher's achievement has been to perceive the direction in which Britain was moving and to exploit it brilliantly by the creation of a new mass clientele for the Conservative Party.

A few figures indicate clearly enough what has happened. Since 1979 there has been an increase of six percentage points in the upper and middle-class section of the population (from 33% to 39%). Those who own their own houses now number 66% (52% in 1979). Share-owners have increased to 19% from 12% in 1983. Membership of trade unions has declined by 8 points from 30% in 1979 to 22% in 1987. Those living in a rented council house have decreased from 35% in 1979 to 27% in 1987.[3]

Here is the fundamental explanation of the Conservative tide that has submerged the South of England and East Anglia and is flowing through the Midlands and up into Lancashire. The rise of a new middle class has brought with it support for a party which has remade itself in their image. The process of economic and social change has been unequal, affecting first regions like the South-East and East Anglia which have profited from a switch in the direction of trade from the Atlantic towards Western Europe and from the rise of the service industries ringing London. The old industrial areas of the North and Scotland have not yet experienced the transformation, though there are signs that the same forces are at work.

The link between economic modernisation and political structures has, indeed, been visible for some time. In 1984 52% of all employment was to be found in four regions: the South-East, the South-West, East Anglia, and the East Midlands. But these were the very areas where the 1983 election left the Labour Party with only a handful of seats—a result to which 1987 has imparted an air of normality. Economic expansion, the modernisation of industry, and the resulting changes in society seem to have gone hand-in-hand with the erosion of the Labour vote.

It is easy enough to sketch the process through which this has taken place. The break-up of old industries, with their concentrations of unionised labour, and their replacement by smaller, high-technology manufacturing services and the enterprises of the self-employed have reduced trade-union membership. This reduction, in turn, has made it more difficult for the Labour Party to remain in contact with, or to influence, those who were once considered its natural voters. Meanwhile the private sale of publicly-owned council houses, one of the most magically successful political strokes of recent British history, has created division within what had been Labour strongholds. Labour canvassers found that their task was no longer one of simply getting out the vote on the housing estates. A kernel of Conservative supporters was created where none had existed before.[4] The Labour Party could no longer rely on either the factory-gate or a strategically placed committee-room on a council estate to keep in touch with the faithful.

The socio-political institutions on which the Labour Party has traditionally relied to circulate its message and rally its supporters are being dissolved by new structures of industry and spreading middle-class habits. The clubs and pubs in which Party members once met, as much for social amusement as for political activity, have lost their appeal as television and discothèques divide the stay-at-homes from the young and energetic. Skilled workers in particular have acquired new standards and needs. New privatisation is destroying a natural rallying point for Labour support in old nationalised industries, where employees once saw their self-interest in electing a Labour government whose liberality with subsidies would be greater than that of the Conservatives.[5]

---

[2] What actually went on during the election campaign is to be found in the MORI poll which seems to have been more accurate than its rivals in predicting the final result. The Labour advance came from undecided voters, while Alliance defectors split equally between Conservative and Labour. However, the most damaging result for the Alliance of the Labour recovery was that it hardened Conservative support and dried up any possible flow of votes to the Alliance from that quarter. (See *British Public Opinion*, June 1987, p.2.)

[3] These figures are taken from a MORI survey carried out for *The Sunday Times* between November 1986 and March 1987. (See *British Public Opinion*, May 1987, p.4.)

[4] Another MORI finding was that 37% of those who had bought their council houses vote Conservative as against 20% of council tenants. During the last campaign a Conservative organiser was heard saying, "If a house has a loft-extension, you can bet it's a Conservative voter. . . ." That tells the story.

[5] The MORI survey shows a significantly higher proportion of workers in nationalised industries voting Labour rather than Conservative. In privately-owned organisations the Conservatives have a considerable lead.

PRODUCED 2005 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

The picture of change in Britain that emerges from what has been said above not only explains the election result, but also has depressing implications for the future of the Labour Party. For there is no reason to suppose that the transformation of British life will stop where it is. The famous "North-South" divide was always an over-simplification. But in so far as it represents anything at all, it is not so much a line drawn between "two nations" as a moving frontier which will be pushed northwards as modernisation spreads. The contrast is between "ancient" and "modern" Britain, but the former is receding and the latter advancing.[6] Labour's northern heartlands will be vulnerable as economic recovery comes to them. As the election results show, the Conservatives are spreading into the West Midlands and holding bridgeheads in Lancashire and Yorkshire. Moreover, the Labour strongholds are losing population. Another parliamentary redistribution would diminish the number of seats in those areas, and these changes may come before the next election.[7]

WHAT CAN the Labour Party do to solidify the ground that is trembling under its feet? Neil Kinnock has put a new face on the Party, but has failed to change its policies. All the old shibboleths are there, but neatly packaged and tied up with pink ribbon. Like Sheridan's Widow Ochre, the head is modern, but the trunk is antique.

One attempt to find a new constituency has come from the Left wing of the party, and seems to have been initiated by Ken Livingstone for a somewhat different purpose. Gather together a coalition of groups marginal to society and hostile to received social opinions—ethnic minorities, feminists, homosexual and Lesbian activists, students, anarchists and others—and you will end with a reliable nucleus of militants, many of whom are unemployed and can therefore give their whole time to agitation and the raising of the political temperature.

It was this adroit answer (echoing Dr Marcuse in '68) to the problem of how to replace the old working-class supporters of the Labour Party which turned the London Labour Party caucus into something that a Labour member of the old Greater London Council could compare to the antechamber of the Ayatollah Khomeini. Here were people who could be trusted to turn up at meetings and vote (or howl) down the remnants of the Right wing. Here were shock troops who could be used to man demonstrations, sign petitions and—if the occasion offered—battle with the police. The positions they conquered in society—a polytechnic student union or a local borough council—could then be regarded as a base, a "sanctuary" from which guerrilla raids could be launched against government and society.

In terms of organisational weaponry it was a brilliant success. Unfortunately, however, this bizarre combination of interest groups proved less effective when it came to attracting the electorate. Indeed, the ordinary voter seemed positively repelled by some of its components. A machine intended to dominate and manipulate the party caucuses was ill-adapted to the capturing of votes. Ken Livingstone's acceptance, and maximising, of the Labour Party's minority position in present-day political society offers no solution for Neil Kin-

[6] A distinction between "*le pays moderne*" and "*le pays arrièré*" was made by the French political scientist François Goguel when analysing the politics of the Fourth Republic in the early 1950s. He noted that the Gaullists and the Communists dominated the economically modern parts of France, while the parties composing the "Third Force" were confined to the economically backward regions. He rightly regarded this as casting doubt on their future. In fact, they were out of office between 1958 and 1981.

[7] Scotland is obviously a special case. Scottish national feeling resents decisions from Whitehall, whichever political party is in power; and the fear of change, which seems to exist strongly in Scotland, is reinforced by fear of a loss of national identity.

"Horny-Handed Sons of Toil. . . ."

A PRESSURE GROUP *of old-fashioned working-class Labour MPs tonight launch a Commons campaign to prove the Party has not been taken over by London social workers in bomber-jackets committed to campaigning for Gay Rights.*

Joe Ashton, the MP behind the group, said the aim was to appeal to people

"who have no money left the day before pay-day. They are convinced that the Labour Party is nothing but social workers and London people campaigning for Gays and Lesbians, interested in minority groups, Save-the-Whatever. . . ."

EX-MINER JOE ASHTON, *in addition to his MP's pay of nearly £20,000 a year, is said to earn twice that much writing a regular newspaper column. The group meeting, at Westminster, thought the intellectuals had let Labour down during the election campaign over their handling of policy on the married man's tax allowance. The academics had failed to put the policy over in a way that ordinary people could understand.*

"Infiltrators and poseurs" will be excluded, according to the leader of the new "Rambo Tendency".

The new group includes 20 former engineers, 10 miners, and an array of erstwhile dockers, and crane and van drivers.

BUT *Mr Neil Kinnock, the Labour leader, a graduate and former Workers' Educational Association lecturer, would be excluded despite his working class credentials as the son of a disabled miner.*

"The qualifications are that he must have left school at the earliest possible age and gone straight into full-time manual work. This is to show people outside that the Labour Party does not simply comprise Social Workers, Lecturers, and Teachers. Only horny-handed sons of toil need apply."

The back-to-the-roots campaign urged that documents should be written in

"working-class English, rather than social workers' Latin."

DAILY TELEGRAPH/
LONDON EVENING STANDARD

PRODUCED 2005 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

nock. He still has to find an answer to the question which history and Mrs Thatcher have posed to him.[8]

In contrast, Mrs Thatcher has adapted her party and her policies to social change. The nature of English Conservatism has altered. Its aristocratic overtones have disappeared and been replaced by something nearer to Right-wing parties on the continent or in the United States. Where are the knights of the shire now, those powerful Tory figures whose writ ran over broad swathes of the Midlands or the West Riding? Where are the Pyms and Priors with whom the Prime Minister began her succession of governments? Patrician Toryism has faded—perhaps Mr John Biffen is its last representative, albeit by adoption—and has been succeeded by a party largely dominated by the "New Class" whose advent has been symbolised by the new classlessness.

The typical supporter of Mrs Thatcher's Conservative Party comes from the new middle class and is sufficiently well off to envisage tastes that certainly include new cars and new clothes and might stretch to country cottages and holidays abroad. If he is prosperous enough or if his company provides him with those benefits, he might aspire to private schooling for his children and private medicine for himself. He has probably not been to a major public school or to an old university. Neither his affluence nor his habits are hereditary. Perhaps that is why he lacks the guilty inhibitions of his economic equals who come from the old professional classes. His instincts are kindly and humane, but he will have little in the way of religion; and his beliefs, formed in an age of middle-class unemployment, will concern the need to work and the justice of the reward that comes from steady application to business.

He possesses a civic sense and is adept at playing his part in those local interest groups which spring up to do battle with Councils or Education Authorities. He is concerned for the environment, but his imagination is stirred more by a threat to the countryside he knows than by apocalyptic prophecies. He is more familiar with foreign countries than his father would have been, since he travels more frequently on business or for his holidays in the sun. But he knows little about their history or culture, and less about their languages. In international relations he is a sturdy partisan of British interests and does not see why his country should not "stand up for itself". He will give generously for famine relief, but attaches no importance to the opinions of governments which seem to him corrupt and inefficient.

He is, therefore, immune to moral blackmail. His charitable gestures do not betray any need to justify himself. Not for him those musings about the fate of the Third World or the ecological imbalance of the Planet Earth which appear to occupy so large a place in the liberal-Left media. It is his intention to enjoy the fruits of his labour comfortably, without regrets and without handing over too great a proportion of them to the state. He is less well educated, less eccentric and

[8] In case anyone thinks that some political prejudice on my part has exaggerated Labour's dilemma, let me quote from an article by a Left-wing intellectual. Stuart Hall ("Blue Election, Election Blues", in *Marxism Today*, July 1987) writes:

> "Thatcherism's victory was rooted not in any temporary fluctuation of support, but in the deep movements and tendencies which have been re-shaping the British political map. The problem the Left now faces is structural and organic."

He believes that Mrs Thatcher's achievement has been to "construct a new social bloc" and that Labour's northern strongholds are "not impervious to Thatcherite inroads".

Mr Hall's own remedy, put forward rather despairingly, would be to cultivate the women's vote. Mr Kinnock's "familial' image" is said to have "carried not a single echo or trace of feminist struggles over two decades".

In the same number of *Marxism Today* Gorbachov is also taken to task by a reader for being "hampered by lack of a feminist ideological underpinning".

The Politics of the Post-Socialist Era

By Peter Jenkins

Sir Isaiah Berlin remarked the other day that this was the first time since the French Revolution that there is no project on the Left among the Parisian intelligentsia.

That is a striking way of drawing attention to the ending of the Age of Socialism. But at the same time it draws attention to the lacuna which exists as the 20th century moves towards its close. For it is improbable that man, or woman, can live by incrementalism alone. The modern age is characterised by hope. High expectations make societies difficult to govern but it is the expectation of something better, in heaven or on earth, which makes them governable at all.

In one sense **the politics of the post-socialist era have already dawned and their name is "Thatcherism". For there is little doubt that in the eight years since 1979 the assumptions on which political argument is conducted have shifted a great deal. Democratic socialists have felt obliged to try to wrest back the idea of liberty from the libertarian right, although with no great success, as shown by Roy Hattersley's recent ponderous tome.**

We have all been obliged to concede a greater role to markets, the corporatist tendencies of the '70s have lost most of their force, and a new consensus has begun to form around the diminished power of the trade unions. We are, perhaps, all populists now.

Yet what we call *"Thatcherism" is probably a transitional phenomenon which belongs still to the age of socialism. That is because a great deal of its thrust is anti-socialist.*

Attitudes may to some extent have changed—productivity figures suggest so—but there are few signs of the cultural transformation required to bring about the American-style enterprise society of the Prime Minister's dreams. The clearest evidence of this is that, in so far as attitudes may have changed towards the role of the State in managing the economy, this has not been accompanied by any discernible change of attitude towards the duty of the State to provide welfare, medical care, and education. We are not much nearer to a Free Market society than we were to a socialist society.

In trying to imagine **the post-socialist 21st century we can be sure of one thing. It will incorporate a good many so-**

PRODUCED 2005 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

less amusing, less of "a character", than the Conservative cast in a more traditional mould. But he has also left faded dreams of Empire and "world responsibility" far behind. His is a reasonable adaptation to the requirements of the late 20th century. He is no ideologue, though he will become impatient with those who fail to show what he considers practicality and common sense. And among such people are not a few Labour politicians. . . .

THIS SKETCH is an impressionistic one, intended to suggest the nature of the new Conservative Party created by Mrs Thatcher. Paternalism is out, personal effort in. One can hanker after the independence and disinterestedness of the old-fashioned Tory. But it should also be remembered that the overturning of Conservative hierarchies, which marked Mrs Thatcher's accession to power within the Party, was brought about by a failure to deal effectively with Britain's problems. At the risk of slight unfairness it could be said that the Macmillan years were a period of political style without substance.

Mrs Thatcher's understanding of, and sympathy for, the new trends in British society enabled her to see where the future lay. Her policies have been designed to further the rise of a new, property-owning middle class, and, as it happens, she has been working with the social grain. The first requirement to which this economically active section of the population attached importance was that something should be done to make Britain "work" as a country, to arrest a decline in economic power and wealth which had been going on since 1945. By 1979 the crisis of British industry had nearly reached a point of no return. To save what could be saved two things were necessary.

First, what could not be rescued must be allowed to fail, and good money must not be flung after bad. For the rest a restoration of profitability was essential—in 1976 investment in British manufacturing was only receiving a 2.9% return—and, to achieve this, manpower would have to be cut.

Secondly, since such a process would obviously be unwelcome to the trade unions, these had to be curbed by law. The abuse of power by sclerotic and irresponsible union bureaucracies had been such that this determination would be applauded by public opinion. A largely politicised trade-union movement, unable to control the anarchic tendencies of its own shop-stewards, could not be allowed to frustrate the attempt to regenerate British industry. In 1974 Edward Heath's efforts to introduce reform in this area had been defeated and his government overthrown by trade-union power, whose subsequent dictation to Harold Wilson of the terms on which it was willing to cooperate with the Government laid the foundations of economic and financial disaster. Now the ground lost by the authority of the state was to be regained.

BOTH THESE TASKS were carried through, though one year of the country's time had to be wasted on Arthur Scargill and his shock-troops. But the price of ensuring the survival of British industry was high—three million unemployed. "De-manning" was the condition of a rejuvenation of enterprises which might otherwise have disappeared altogether.[9] To be prepared to take the electoral consequences of this level of unemployment was the mark of political determination of a high order. Talk of the "devastation" of

[9] British Steel is a case in point. At one time, like much of the European steel industry, it looked hardly capable of survival. Now, after Ian MacGregor's amputations in its workforce, it is considered one of the most efficient steel producers in the world, and one of the very few to be making a profit.

cialist values in the same way that the socialist 20th century incorporated a good many values from the preceding Age of Liberalism. "Liberty" and "democracy" are words much bandied in the vocabulary of socialism, although socialism has little to do with them; and because it was famously asserted that socialism was "about equality" it is often assumed, wrongly, that equality has to be about socialism. The distinctive idea of socialism is that economic organisation is the key to liberty, equality, and human happiness. The pre-socialist notion was that these were natural rights which could be advanced independently of economic conditions. Indeed Adam Smith regarded political liberty as the necessary condition for economic freedom; not, as does the New Right, the other way round.

IN THE POST-SOCIALIST AGE, *liberty, equality and justice may come to be reinstated as intrinsic virtues. We can already see how rights have begun to cut across the ideological divides—the right to a job, a home, the right to educational choice or private medicine, the right to rights as laid down in the European Convention on Human Rights.*

Post-socialist politics are bound to be in large part about the State, the limits of its powers, and the extent of its responsibilities, for that is what politics have always been most about. In much of post-War Western Europe there came to exist a broad consensus in favour of social democracy or liberal capitalism, which is to say market-oriented economic régimes combined with State-provided welfare. This compromise was made possible by fast growth, and may become possible again. But what we now know, or should know, is that socialist policies of production tend to be hostile to the wealth creation which is the necessary condition of its more just distribution.

THE POLITICS **of the post-socialist era will be characterised by a majority of haves over have-nots. Central to the socialist century was the notion, or the myth, of the proletariat as the real majority suppressed only by the wiles of the "ruling class" or its own "false consciousness". Justice was harnessed to class, the poor advised to cling to the coat-tails of the Transport & General Workers' Union.**

In post-socialist society not only the poor but the working class itself will be minorities. Once that is realised, and it is grasped that producer interests are no longer paramount, it may become more feasible to build new coalitions of interest or principle around other issues of liberty or justice.

Peter Jenkins
in THE INDEPENDENT (*London*)

PRODUCED 2005 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

British industry is beside the point, only indulged in by those who have little idea of the magnitude of the 1979 crisis.[10]

In 1987 steady economic growth and a low level of inflation are there, and it looks as though falling unemployment lies ahead. This is not to say that the British economy is not still vulnerable or that Mrs Thatcher's administration has not made important mistakes. Britain, however, has done rather better in dealing with its problems than the other European countries who made the same mistakes during the 1970s. There is less talk now of *le mal anglais*. But the political strains engendered by the struggle were great. It was economic policy that separated the "dry" sheep from the "wet" goats in Mrs Thatcher's Government.

As the constraints of economic stringency have loosened, the Prime Minister has been able to offer her middle-class clientele some of the benefits of success. She could also offer them the distractions of a firm foreign policy which paid off in areas as far apart as the Falklands and Brussels, and which culminated in the pre-election spectacle of superpower treatment for herself in Moscow. At home the years of the first two Thatcher Governments were mostly painful, filled with "cuts" and bankruptcies. Now more pleasurable symptoms have begun to appear: reductions in tax and interest rates, rises in shares and personal incomes. The promises made to middle-class supporters are being performed. A third term will allow this achievement to be extended into other areas of national life and, if all goes well, enlarge the Conservatives' electoral base.

"The Inner Cities" and Education have been announced as the Government's main concerns during the years to come. In tackling these, Mrs Thatcher intends to bring reform to institutions badly in need of it; also further to erode the Labour Party's positions and gratify her own supporters. For the new middle class does not want to abandon Welfare or public Education. What it wants is value for money and the ability to choose what is best for its children. It does not want disorderly classrooms and indoctrination by ideologised and slightly dotty teachers. It does not want money to be spent by local authorities on hare-brained schemes that offend its common sense.

Reform will mean changing the habits of bureaucracies whose prejudices have been allowed to develop into traditions over the years. Moreover, progress in improving the desolate inner cities and the disoriented education service will involve overcoming the opposition of the public service unions and of Left-wing local authorities, who view their position as a fortress from which to defy late-capitalist government. But the "Inner Cities programme" will not only please new conservatives, but also will further disrupt traditional centres of Labour Party power. The operation is the political equivalent of pushing a salient into the enemy lines during the First World War. It will be fiercely and desperately resisted; but, if it succeeds, the political gains are certain.

The same might be said about Education. Giving "power to parents", freedom of choice in the selection of schools, more authority to headmasters, and imposing a central curriculum and differential salaries for teachers—such measures are bound to be attacked by professional educationalists who will find excellent reasons for keeping everything as it is. But then professional educationalists bear a heavy responsibility for the present inadequacies of state education. To reform the schools is merely to do justice to the poor, for whom they are the only way out of poverty. But to improve education also meets an important requirement of the new middle class, for whom "parent power" and greater "freedom of choice" are attractive propositions, in tune with the confidence they feel in their own judgment.

"Liberty", wrote Carlyle, "requires new definitions." Mrs Thatcher has succeeded in breaking the economic fetters which for so long hampered and preoccupied successive British governments. Now we are to see the social side of Thatcherism whose aims have been roughly described as "helping people to help themselves". Of course the middle class is already able to help itself and will move without much difficulty into the new pastures of personal choice and social responsibility which are opening before it. The poorer sections of society are to be weaned from dependence on the state by the provision of work, better instruction, and a more favourable environment. The reality of welfare will be, in Rousseau's contentious phrase, "to force men to be free". This is, indeed, a "new definition". How it will work remains to be seen.

Yet would the idea have been so far removed from the intentions of the Victorian originators of our present systems of social care? The Evangelicals and Utilitarians who furnished the charitable will and administrative capacity to cope with the evils of the Industrial Revolution never envisaged the creation of a class of citizens permanently dependent on government bounty. The present existence of such a class, whose dependence on the social services is total—and who are prevented from shaking themselves free by the inadequate, but entangling, nature of the treatment they receive—is humiliating for them and corrupting for those who find themselves, willy-nilly, in control of other people's lives. Ceaselessly directed around a maze of bureaucratic procedures, the clients can find little time for anything else, while their mentors must judge them by their obedience to norms of behaviour that take little account of individuality. Dependence on private charity has traditionally been held to be destructive of human dignity. Dependence on state charity without the possibility of an exit from the system is no less so. Is it, therefore, "insensitive" or "uncaring" to emphasise ways in which the recipient of state benefits may regain his independence?

G. M. Young once defined the aim of Victorian reform

[10] Peter F. Drucker has underlined the point in a recent article: "No developed country can hope any longer to maintain labour-intensive manufacturing industries. It can only remain competitive in manufactured goods if it eliminates blue-collar labour as a cost factor, that is, if it automates." ("Japan's Choices", *Foreign Affairs*, Summer 1987, pp. 925-926.)

PRODUCED 2005 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

as "the steady diffusion of culture and comfort downwards and outwards in widening circles. . . ."[11] "Culture and comfort"—Mrs Thatcher has provided a good deal of the second commodity, as the soaring figures for the possession of houses and refrigerators and washing-machines—not to mention cars, television sets, home computers, telephones, aquariums, saxophones and tennis rackets—show. But it can hardly be said that the decade of Thatcherism has yet produced cultural gifts to set alongside the comfort. Books seem the last acquisition to be found in the homes of the deadened and entranced addicts of the television screen.[12] Perhaps, now that the economic crisis has eased, the need for a cultural dimension in a changed society will be recognised. Perhaps the new plans for education will include that introduction to high culture without which an individual is most unjustly deprived. Meanwhile, it may be the absence of this dimension in the business of a reforming government which raises the hackles of the literary intellectuals, university teachers, and cultivated churchmen who have denounced Mrs Thatcher in terms that are unjust and absurd.

There would be much more to say on this subject, but it would be too long a digression. The truth is that, if Britain is on the way to recovery from its previous malaise, there will come a time when we must decide what we wish to do with the gains we have made. Will we ever think again of where to gather our "sweetness and light"?

NEVERTHELESS, the election result has left the future of British politics obscure. From what I have said, it would be possible to conclude that we are in for an indefinite period of Conservative rule. Yet wouldn't such a conclusion be contrary to common sense and political experience? Accidents happen, climates of opinion grow stormy; and, sooner or later, the electorate will demand a change. None the less, the state of the Opposition is such that their success is more likely to come about through inadvertence on the part of the Government in power than through their own unaided efforts.

Before Thursday, 11 June, it was possible to think that this election would mark another stage in the restructuring of British politics. If the Alliance had received more votes than the Labour Party, then we should have moved nearer to its replacement of the latter as the main party of opposition. Had Neil Kinnock fought an obviously incompetent campaign, then the odds are that his position as leader would have been under threat and that the ensuing infighting would once again have released those corrosive enmities which are the solvents of the Labour Party, as a mushroom is digested by the juices it secretes. Neither of these things has happened. The time has not come, and the mould of British politics remains unbroken. The political forces opposing Mrs Thatcher have grown weaker; they have not realigned.

The Alliance, indeed, seems to be nearing its end. During the 1983 election David Steel allied himself with David Owen to remove Roy Jenkins. Now he is allying himself with Mr Jenkins to remove Dr Owen and take over the SDP. A merger between the Liberals and the Social Democrats is proposed as a panacea for their ill fortune, but it is a union without a catalyst, whose only effect has been to create a damaging effervescence in both parties. For Mr Steel's post-election bid was made in indecent haste; and the prisoner has not gone quietly.

Of course, it was always predictable that Dr Owen's *realpolitik* would one day prove unwelcome to the Liberals, whose mild taste for a vegetarian diet must arouse some impatience in anyone concerned with power. But an attempted *coup d'état*, which would eliminate the only Alliance leader

Art, Glory, & Power

London

THATCHERISM **has never maintained that there is no role for the state in the common weal. The thesis has been rather different, namely that the state should be removed from those areas where it has no business to be.**

But, conversely, the state must remain in the great areas of public service such as education, the health service and the arts. You cannot have a great international opera house without state support, however much you may charge for the tickets. You cannot have a National Gallery or a Tate Gallery or a Victoria & Albert Museum or a Science Museum without state subsidy.

Of course there is a place for private sponsorship, but every arts minister from my period onwards, including Mr Richard Luce, has upheld the principle that it must be supplementary not substitutive.

WHEN *Mrs Thatcher first came into office, she was beleaguered by "Wets", including myself. She could not afford to give way on any front lest one concession destroyed her grand design of controlling public expenditure and bringing inflation under control.*

But today the situation is wholly changed. She is in supreme and unchallenged control. Is this not the time to open the purse strings a little wider for the arts which after all constitute our great post-War successes?

Increased grants or improved tax concessions would be equally acceptable. Up to 1946 until the Labour Chancellor Dr Dalton abolished it, taxpayers were able to give tax-deductible annual donations to the arts without limit. The cost to a top taxpayer of a donation of £1000 was thus not more than £25.

COULD WE NOT GO **some way along this road in the next Budget? Then we should see glory added to power, and what good is one without the other?**

Norman St John-Stevas

in the LONDON EVENING STANDARD

[11] G. M. Young, *Victorian England* (1936), p. 153.

[12] I find it curious to reflect that whereas in countries as dissimilar as Germany and Spain, efforts are being made to encourage "reading for pleasure" and the purchase of books, in Britain almost nothing of the kind has taken place. Even the publishers do little about it.

PRODUCED 2005 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

possessing some resonance in public opinion, is a policy so disastrous that it is hard to see how anyone could embark on it who had not been knocked off balance by disappointment and frustration.

Dr Owen represents the originality and, hence, the future of the SDP; Roy Jenkins, Shirley Williams and Bill Rodgers represent its past. Mr Steel plainly hankers after a "Lib-Lab" coalition, a return to his formal Parliamentary support for Prime Minister James Callaghan in the late 1970s. But where, in all this, is the ambition to change the shape of political life? Under the stress of defeat Mr Steel has reverted to a "little" Liberalism. Dr Owen may well have "no political future", as the London columnists tell us. Yet, curiously, the future may still be on his side. He has ideas and personality; and Mrs Thatcher's example shows that these still count for something on the national stage. David Owen remains the politician who has learned most from her—in a sense, he is her most natural heir.

As for Neil Kinnock, he is now setting about the laborious task of introducing change into the Labour Party. Mere cosmetics will be useless; rouge and powder were tried during the election campaign. Will the Leader of the Opposition recognise that it was his *policies* which were judged and rejected by the voters? It would certainly be possible to develop new ones, more or less along social-democratic lines. But will the nature of the Party allow this? Can policies be found which will satisfy simultaneously the general electorate and the Party caucuses?

Looking at the present state of Labour, one is inclined to doubt it. Ambiguity would have to be strained to the point of meaninglessness to discover phrases acceptable both to the general public and to, say, a militant constituency committee in Liverpool. Bryan Gould apparently favours offering the middle class anything they want from him ("What! Anything?"). But the terms on which this wooing has to be conducted are constantly being changed by Mrs Thatcher. To adapt itself to so fluid a situation, the Labour Party would require a flexibility which nothing in its history suggests that it possesses.

What emerges from the election results appears to be the apotheosis of Mrs Thatcher. The rest, in Hamlet's words, shall keep as they are, and, one might add, rather worse than they were. The clock of British politics seems to have been stopped, while that which marks social change is running apace. Now the Prime Minister can extend her policies into further areas of national life. It is an intoxicating position. Clearly Mrs Thatcher is on the point of becoming one of those legendary figures of English public life who end by making even their faults an advantage. Of course, she must always have appeared to the British public as something of a folk heroine. The assertive and determined woman is to be encountered in all walks of British society. Seaside landladies, hospital matrons, headmistresses, the matriarchal ruler of many a country village—these and many others can be found throughout the length and breadth of Britain, exerting a tart but usually benevolent influence on those around them. Energy and practicality are their virtues; and a tendency to put mere men in their place one of their more redoubtable characteristics. Identification with so familiar a category imparts a kind of homeliness to Mrs Thatcher, even in her formidable moments.

If vertigo overtakes her on the heights of the extraordinary ascendancy she has won, then energy and practicality may be her salvation. "*Wer immer strebend sich bemüht, den können wir erlösen.*" No one can say that Mrs Thatcher has not striven with "the condition of England". With what success, the voters ventured a judgment in June; and history will have its word to say later. Yet by herself she cannot wholly change British political life, though she has done her best—has, indeed, created a situation where, one feels, a transformation of the whole British party system must come. Will other members of the political class learn the lessons of what has happened? If not, they will soon be irrelevant to any foreseeable future. Meanwhile, the tide runs blue.

Marriage

My wife wakes in my arms, smiles drowsily,
And murmurs what she dreamt: she and I
Were driving down a highway furiously
After a truck marked HIGH EXPLOSIVES. "Why
Are we doing this?" I yelled.
"Can't you see
The explosives dumped, exploding on either side?
Drive faster, that's the only way we're free
From being blown apart!" A strange ride
We took, roaring, tailgating down the strip,
My searching out which direction to take
Should the other driver's concentration slip
And he be forced to slam down on the brake.

David Galler

PRODUCED 2005 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Richard Deveson

Struth

IT MUST BE nearly thirty years ago now—the third or even the last summer that we spent in Osterthorpe. In later summers my parents decided that they had had enough of playing Monopoly with us while the Norfolk rain rattled against the thin roof and walls of our bungalow; they had had enough of huddling behind a windbreak on the beach; they had certainly had enough of making self-punitive forays from behind the windbreak into the gritty waves of the North Sea. We started going abroad, and the Osterthorpe holidays started that imperceptible, inescapable process of receding into idyll. They weren't, of course, an idyll in which the sun had always shone. But they were holidays on which I had had my ninth, tenth, eleventh and twelfth birthdays, and what real rain-clouds were there to wash out the sun of my life between the ages of nine and twelve? All right, a silly question.

I suppose that even the thrill of the first glimpse of the sea, as our car reached the top of a rise just beyond North Walsham, had a sort of sexual charge. So, no doubt, did throwing oneself into the water's embrace once we had arrived and had been allowed to rush barefoot across the prickling grass and down the concrete sea-wall to the beach. And I can remember the sense of admiration that was aroused in me by the limbs and bathing-costumes of two girls whose family used to share our patch of sand—large, strapping women who must have been all of sixteen and seventeen. This admiration was almost aesthetic; almost, though not quite, abstract. I was impressed by the way the seamed panels of satin curved with perfect rightness around the tops of their suntanned thighs and the oddly maternal slopes of their chests; I was also vaguely aware, with respectful mystification, of the girls' world of hair-combing, giggles, "boyfriends", and sudden leggy splashing charges into the sea. They seemed creatures of another species; remote, unknowable, like race-horses.

Boys' swimming-trunks also had fetishistic properties. For one of those birthdays I was given a glossy pair for the first time, to replace my old woollen shorts. They were tied at the front with a white cord that was then tucked inside the waist. With these I strutted, ran and jumped around on the spiky grass and the hard sand; at once I grew up several months. I was now only one stage away from the sort of trunks I coveted even more, though I knew I wasn't entitled to hope for them yet. These came in two pieces, laced together with white cords which went down the sides in a criss-cross pattern like Viking garters. They were the style favoured by my school's swimming team—not that I had any ambitions in that direction—and boys who had won their school "colours" were entitled to fix the school's badge, a white unicorn, on the centre of the trunks, where it too would curve gently to accommodate the somewhat daunting male swelling that seemed to be the chief qualification for wearing trunks of this sort at all.

But on the whole, thoughts of school would slip away entirely on these holidays in Osterthorpe. School was over a hundred miles back down the road, and in any case the Jollys, the family with the two daughters, were the only other people in our semicircle of '30s bungalows who came from home. In a guarded way we made friends with the other children on the "estate" (which was called, with brave originality, "Cliff Top"), and it came as something of a shock, an echo of a half-forgotten existence, to hear that they too, in their unknown towns, were learning French or were in cricket teams or had to wear caps and uniforms and black shoes with plain toecaps. But the great relief was that for them our father was only our father; he wasn't, as he was back home, a master at the school as well. No one mocked his *r*s that were like *w*s. No one smirked if his glasses fell off as he ran up to bowl in our impromptu cricket matches. No one called him "Cwackers", his school nickname, which my brother and I, not seeing matters with the dispassion (or the sentimentality) of adults, were sure carried overtones of cruelty and malice. Above all, no one accused us of being covert members of the bosses' party: stool-pigeons planted among the work-force. I don't want to give the impression that I was forever weighed down by these thoughts. But it made a difference to be able to forget them. Osterthorpe was a release from all that.

The grass rimmed by the bungalows was our cricket field; the concrete floor of what had once been a war-time Nissen hut was the wicket. My brother and I were the Surrey team, which in those years was winning the County Championship with never-wearisome regularity. Peter May stroked cover drives across the tussocks towards the bungalow where "Smart Roger"and his family lived, or hammered straight drives into "Giglamps's" front garden. Tony Lock performed wizard-

PRODUCED 2005 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ries of spin with a bald tennis-ball. We would be called to lunch, would wash the dried sand off our legs and feet in an iron water-butt by the side of the house, would drowse away an afternoon hour on the creaking beds with a hoard of sweet-smelling old American comics, and then it would be time for the beach again, or for a run in our ageing Morris Ten through the Norfolk back lanes, to a draughty church steeped in must and wood-rot, where we would press down the silent keys of the organ, count the sides of the font, and perhaps sign the visitors' book "K. Marx" or "H. Macmillan".

I wonder if we weren't just a touch priggish. Being a schoolmaster's son can lure one into the disdainfulness of the insider as well as the discomfort of the outsider. Even in Osterthorpe the Smart Rogers and the Giglampses, as well as slightly scaring us, also seemed beneath us. We must have got the antique term "giglamps" from our father, though he would never have mocked another boy, and certainly not because he wore glasses. But we mocked, within the bosom of the family; nor did we see any inconsistency in privately serving out nicknames ourselves. Life on the estate was, to just a tiny degree, like a spectacle laid on for us alone, in the same way that the flinty Norfolk churches hidden behind their elms were a secret no one else was clever enough to have discovered, and that Surrey's ownership of the championship had been arranged purely to assure us of the rightness of things.

Let me be fair to myself, though: this touch of smugness was really only of the gentlest. I know that far and away the more important reason why the Osterthorpe spectacle held me was that it meant, for a timid and impressionable eleven- and twelve-year-old, an opening up of the world. And I also know, despite the nonexistence of idylls, that in those summers I was happy.

Looking back, I think my father was happy in Osterthorpe too. I hope he was. Only towards the end of our four August weeks did talk of "results" and "meetings" cast its shadow. The day before going home we would go for a ritual last walk in the wood with its willow-herb and green blackberries; would do a last ritual scan of Norfolk church towers, eight or ten from some vantage-points; would half-enjoy, half-endure, a last marrow-chilling swim. My father would mark these rituals with a sigh which embarrassed me and yet spoke to me too. I didn't realise then that his state of mind was catching. Thirty years on, I myself salute moments of happiness with a sigh, and embarrass my own son.

ONE MORNING on the beach, we had built our stockade of deck-chairs, windbreaks, towels and sand-castles when I was astonished to look up and see two boys approaching whom I knew from school. It was a moment for panic. Our Osterthorpe cast of characters was complete, preordained; or at any rate, only strangers were allowed to be added to it. These two highly familiar faces belonged to a different story altogether. And their owners were older than me too.

"Hello, Holmes", my father said, getting up from his deck-chair. "Hello, McCartney."

"Hello, sir."

"Sir."

"No need to be formal, is there? It's Jonathan and—Nick?"

"Sir."

"And I needn't be 'sir' here, need I? Have you come to join us?"

"Going for a swim, sir."

"Jolly good. Well—don't go out too far."

"Sir." They loped off.

Panic was temporarily replaced by bafflement. Adults had the capacity constantly to be a move or two ahead. Not only was my father not discomposed to see Holmes and McCartney, he wasn't even surprised. He must have known they would be coming, but how? The answer, banal enough, emerged only gradually and in passing, as the Jollys arrived on the beach. It had something to do with their knowing the Holmes family, behind my back, so to speak; Jonathan Holmes and his friend from school were going to be here for a couple of days. What could be more natural? What could be more alarming?

The Jollys—who lived up to their name—pitched their own camp amidst much shrieking, pranking, and barking of dogs. The daughters, Angela and Priss, lowered their satin-encased forms on to their outstretched towels. They had each bought a new pair of bow-shaped sun-glasses set with fake mother-of-pearl, and these gave their faces an extra layer of mask-like American untouchability. I could only dig furiously and unconstructively into the sand.

Holmes and McCartney were two years ahead of me at school: also remote enough, therefore, in their own way. Holmes I knew a little because he was in the choir, an alto just on the brink of turning into a bass, while I was still an unscathed treble. He was "all right": amicably neutral, conventional, not really a threat. McCartney was another matter. At fourteen he was already a school star. He was in the First Eleven (leg breaks; a not-out 50 against New College, Oxford), he was in the swimming team, he was the "Colts" rugby captain, he was universally held in awe. He probably couldn't sing to save his life, and I knew, because my father had taught him, that he wasn't supposed to be very well equipped "on top", but neither piece of insider's information stopped me from feeling this awe too. It was all the more unnerving that he, of all people, should be gracing the Osterthorpe beach with his presence. I watched the two of them diving with enviable sleekness through the breaking waves. McCartney then slid over and showed off his back-stroke, lazy, machined and masterly.

They came back from the sea. Sure enough, McCartney was wearing the magic glossy trunks, with their

PRODUCED 2005 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Viking laces and their obligatory swelling at the front beneath the white unicorn. Drops of water sparkled on his legs and broad brown shoulders.

"Perishing, isn't it?" my father asked.

Neither seemed to want to answer, though each gave the other what I was sure was a suppressed smirk.

"Dry yourselves off before you get frost-bite."

This was even funnier. Holmes hid his face in his towel. McCartney kicked him in the legs and sent him sprawling in the sand, which reduced both of them to croaking laughter.

My father stood up. "Come on", he said. "I think the answer's some rugby. Let's all have a kick-around, shall we?"

He picked up the ball which McCartney had brought down to the beach and sent him a pass that was, to my relief, respectably quick and smooth. McCartney caught the ball, swung round, and punted it high into the sky. The two boys went careering after it across the hard sand towards the sea.

"Come on, son, you'd like to have a go, wouldn't you?"

I was seized with horror. I couldn't possibly play beach rugby with demigods. I shook my head hard and stared at the tiny granules of sand that slid over the edge of my spade: not uniformly yellow, but white, brown, black, red, grey. My father tried again. I shook my head once more, but the idea was almost painfully irresistible.

"Well, you make up your own mind, I'm going." He set off a few yards, and I ran to catch up with him.

I KEPT DROPPING the ball when it came to me, though in my state of unreality that was only to be expected. But at one point I kicked upfield and McCartney collected the awkward bounce and flung himself headlong for a try; then I shot an accurate pass to Holmes, who scissored with McCartney, ran for the line, side-stepped, and sent his captain the final pass for another three points. In a quarter of an hour we had trounced the invisible opposition, and we stopped to get our breath.

"Time for my swim, boys", my father said. "Thanks for the game."

"Watch out", Holmes said, when he had gone out of earshot, "it's pewishing cold."

"Don't flaming well catch fwostbite", McCartney said.

"Sowwy", Holmes said, giving me a mocking glance and then suddenly lunging at McCartney's legs. He tripped him, fell forward as he did so, and the two of them were at once entangled on the sand, writhing with ferocious energy and gasping out hoarse guffaws. The excitement subsided; they stood up and dusted the sand off their legs.

"Let's go and find some women", McCartney said.

"Good man."

"Must be something shaggable on this beach, I reckon."

"See you later, alligator", Holmes said to me; and I was dismissed. They sprinted off down the beach, throwing the rugby ball back and forth between them.

Every now and then, from my position back at the windbreak, I watched them in the distance, dimly wondering what "finding women" entailed. They seemed on the whole to keep moving, occasionally running, perhaps slowing down to a dawdle as they passed a family group. The ball was much in use. Later I looked up and noticed them on their own by the water's edge, playing ducks and drakes. I had almost forgotten their existence when they came up to our encampment again.

They sat down a few yards away from the supine girls. My father was safely out of range, in his deck-chair reading a Penguin novel. Clearly, though, something else was desperately funny now, because they were cackling again while sifting large heaps of sand through their fingers and tossing them up into the air.

". . . the one in blue. . . ."

". . . no, that one was yours. . . ."

The North Sea wind saw to it that one of the airborne heaps gusted and spilt over the girls' legs. A few grains blew under their sun-glasses and into their eyes. They sat up.

"Honestly!" Angela said, wiping out the sand. "Overgrown schoolboys!"

Priss giggled into her shoulder. "Undergrown, you mean."

"Under age, anyway."

To my surprise, I saw that Holmes and McCartney both blushed. The girls rose, cantered off down the beach, pranced over the spread of surf, and threw themselves into the receiving arms of the sea.

THE NEXT DAY was grey and cool. The end of our month was beginning to insinuate itself. We spent the morning in North Walsham, a little town with a market square and a tea-shop in which we were sometimes allowed "milk with a dash" of coffee. In its all-purpose post office we had recently bought my father—who also had an August birthday—a spectacles-polisher, a little scrap of chamois leather mounted in a wallet that was inscribed with the motto "You Can't Be Optimistic With a Misty Optic". Today was a chores day: while our parents bought stamps, my brother and I looked idly among the shelves of books, but found nothing new since our last visit; while they spent an age in the bank we perused the cricket averages in the paper. We argued whether the back half of a car we saw disappearing at the far end of the square belonged to a Humber Hawk or a Humber Super Snipe. Eventually we bumped back to Osterthorpe in our lowlier Morris Ten.

PRODUCED 2005 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

The afternoon was not one for swimming. A few older couples were walking on the beach, striding out in the direction of the red-and-white striped lighthouse a couple of miles along the sea wall and crumbling cliffs. A few children, in jerseys and plastic sandals, were trawling for starfish or shrimps in a pool left by the outflowing tide. My father and I threw a stick for our dog, which he brought back, panting, until he lost interest and went chasing after a seagull that had perched on an uncleared slab of wartime pill-box protruding from the sand. His frustrated barks were carried out to sea.

I noticed the black and white hoops of the school rugby shirt from some distance off; then saw McCartney's sun-blond head above it. Holmes was in a track suit. A flap of his straight hair, usually impeccably neat, was blowing towards vertical like an Indian's feather. They were wearing gym shoes and, with most of the wide beach to themselves, were practising high, long kicks with the rugby ball, running sideways or backwards before catching it stylishly in cradled arms. I was impressed. And yet, as we passed them, I was aware again of the jeering smoulder in their eyes.

"Afternoon, Nick, Jonathan."

"Sir."

I turned back to keep watching. McCartney hammered the ball steeply into the air. The wind caught it, Holmes miscalculated, and it landed by the edge of the surf and sharply ricocheted several yards over the breaking waves into the sea.

"Dad, look."

"They've lost it if they're not careful."

"The tide's going out, isn't it?"

"The wind'll carry it out, more likely."

Holmes and McCartney stared in helplessness as the ball began to bob cheerfully away from the beach. My father went back towards them.

"Hadn't you better go after it?" he said.

"Er. . . ."

"Never brought our trunks, sir."

"Well, good gracious, you needn't. . . ." He looked at their hangdog faces and hesitated for a moment. "All right: well, there's no time to waste."

And he took off his sandals; his woollen socks; peeled off his pullover and shirt; removed his horn-rimmed "Misty Optic" with its curled ear-pieces, placing it carefully in one of the sandals; without a pause lowered his khaki shorts, stood out of them, rolled down his underpants, and walked out into the sea.

The dog barked. The wind and sand flayed my bare legs. My father's white buttocks, disappearing into the water, belonged to a photograph I had seen in an illustrated history of the War, a picture of soldiers bathing in the Mediterranean after a battle in the desert. I had stared at the indecent, frightening page and then hurriedly turned on. I stared now; then looked down at nothing, trying in desperation to stem the flow of blood to my cheeks.

Holmes said:

"Struth, he's in the nude."

I was eleven years old; but in that moment I thought three unformed, arrogant, timid, defiant thoughts: that Holmes had used an evasive genteelism; that he had vulgarly rhymed it with "rude", instead of "feud"; and that I suddenly wanted to dig my toes hard into the gritty sand in pride that I was my father's son. I watched him again. He was doing his steady breaststroke, as ever; was getting closer to the ball, thirty or forty yards out; reached it; turned, and swam slowly back towards land, pushing the prize ahead of his water-streaked face.

"Who would have thought", McCartney muttered. "Old Cwackers. . . . Struth." They said nothing more.

He reached the shallows and waded towards us: the two of them on one side, the dog and I on the other. Below his stomach sprouted a tangle of brown hair, like unearthed roots. The forbidden fruit or vegetable hung beneath it. He gave the chastened pair their ball, with the unmockable dignity I realised he always possessed. Then he picked up his checked shirt and draped it around his waist.

His face without its glasses was always strange and yet completely familiar. "There's a good boy", he said to me. "Nip back up and get me a large towel, will you?"

I turned and ran to the bungalow for dear life.

I thought about my mother dying

Would she send me messages of love
like the old lady in Paris who threaded
her sardines on strings and let them down
from her window to the stray cat below?

Or would she try to give away her heaven,
like her grapes and peppermints in hospital
("Go on, take them home with you")
and float white lilies down to me?

Perhaps she would write in vapour trails:
"Don't do too much, Darling", "You look thin"
and "Have an early night" in vast white letters
on our sky? Or she may not need such novelties;

She'll just be here around me like the mist
that steamed from the river this morning.
Later the sun had burnt it away but tomorrow
it will come back to nestle on the water again.

Felicity Napier

PRODUCED 2005 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Roger Owen

Getting Better

ADDICTION UNITS for the treatment of alcohol abuse are not always situated in mental hospitals. The one in which I found myself was at St Bernard's simply because space happened to be available there when the Unit was set up. Once a famous lunatic asylum (as it was called when it was built a hundred years ago), the hospital stands on the Uxbridge Road, just beyond Hanwell in West London. It has a long boundary wall, and a formidable gatehouse, through which you can see its dominating Victorian chapel: in appearance an altogether dispiriting place, quite unlike the kind of discreetly anonymous clinic I had hoped for when the painful subject of treatment had been raised. But, in spite of this, and in spite of the locked wards and padded cells which were still humiliatingly visible, I now look back on it with gratitude, indeed as an *alma mater*, because it was in those surroundings that I began my recovery from alcoholism. Now, many years later, I want to write about how it worked.

There may be room for argument about whether alcoholism is classifiable as an authentic mental illness, though in practice uncontrolled drinking (the older term "dipsomania" is apt) is demented enough. In time I came to see this truth embodied in the bricks and mortar of the hospital's dark buildings. One room in the Unit, I remember, overlooked the small exercise area of a locked ward, where two or three long-stay patients could be seen perambulating its boundaries in silence, or sometimes ineptly scuffling with each other. At first to find oneself so lumped together with the insane was dismaying, but this dismay was to become a part of the process I had to go through: which I found myself positively wishing to go through. The distress of the sad figures I looked on down there was neither self-induced nor capable of improvement. My own could be transformed by a single act of self-interest. All I had to do was to stop drinking.

These perceptions, including that last transparently obvious one, were arrived at with difficulty, as through a maze.

Altogether I spent two periods of about ten weeks each in St Bernard's, the first late in 1972, and the last in the spring of 1974. Like many of the patients in the Addiction Unit, I had a poor understanding of why I was there. Many of us were in thrall to various consolatory, and often elaborate fictions, less hurtful to our self-esteem than the truth. The first aim of the place was to prise open our minds to the reality of our situation. For example, I believed (the first time round, anyway) that my presence in such a place was not, or not entirely, of my own making, but had somehow been contrived by my wife, in collusion with the Medical Officer of the BBC (my employers)—a lady I judged to be prone to officiousness and melodrama. Of course, I knew I had a "drinking problem", but believed I could cope with it myself, if people would behave a little more feelingly, and discuss the matter in a less exaggerated way. Such delusions are tediously common. I describe them now to show where I started from, how impervious I was to the unpalatable truth. Among alcoholics this common human tendency has become deeply entrenched, in some cases intractably so.

Equally typical were all the other problems I had created for myself, and which now rose to assail me. I had been in the hospital for a few days, and was by then detoxified though still intellectually befuddled, when my wife came to tell me that our marriage was over. I was shocked, itself an inappropriate emotion, since in the circumstances her action was unsurprising. My mood for some time afterwards was compounded of despair and indignation, a combination which served further to obscure from me the salient truth about the reason why I was where I was. Determined to do what I could to change her decision, I flung myself into the treatment, going conscientiously through the forms and procedures which the culture of the Unit seemed to require. Once I even steeled myself to declare my alcoholism publicly at one of the compulsory meetings of Alcoholics Anonymous. In so far as this act demanded the overcoming of strong feelings of repugnance, it took some "will-power", that concept beloved of moralists. After ten weeks, I left the hospital with a declaration of good intention, and with the consent—granted with some diffidence—of the medical staff. I meant well, but secretly hoped, and no doubt it showed, that my display of courage, iron resolution, etc., would be rewarded, and that after further sterling behaviour in the outside world, I would be returned, expiated, in a matter of months to my home and family.

THE NEXT SIX MONTHS were difficult, though less so than those that were to follow. I found somewhere to live, and crept shamefacedly back to my work as a television producer. Divorce proceedings, with their accompanying squalor, were now under way. Deprived of the company I had found in pubs, I was lonely, and attended AA meetings rarely—which was a mistake. I took my children for lunches in town, and re-

PRODUCED 2005 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

mained sober; bitterly and resentfully so. The happy dénouement I had hoped for receded.

So, after lengthy forethought and even planning (I abandoned the Antabuse tablets which make alcohol unacceptable), I got drunk. There was no demonic craving about it: physical dependency had long gone. Again, something very like "will-power" was demanded, and bleakly exercised. My action was a gesture of defiance—made in retreat—to an unaccommodating world.

THE DECLINE THAT FOLLOWED went according to the book. Perhaps it was given an additional push by the Manichean style of the treatment I had already undergone. Whatever the truth of that, I was soon caught up in a drearily familiar circle. Drink both assuaged and fed my feelings of unworthiness. I knew with absolute clarity the harm I was doing; but now that I was dependent again, could do little about it. I pictured myself as Macbeth, the victim of similar equivocations, conscience-stricken but unregenerate: a comparison which, with some allowance for its self-dramatising qualities, still retains a meaning for me. Indifferent to the consequences, or perhaps in some way embracing them, I barely attempted to conceal my drinking, and in due course found myself back in the asylum, now indeed a sanctuary and a refuge. Unbelievably, it seemed to me, my job at the BBC was still being kept for me, so I had much to play for.

The place was unchanged, except for some spring flowers in the gardens. The same West Indian Staff Nurse admitted me, shaking his head and tut-tutting softly, without censure. There were a few men hanging around the quiet ward—some in the classic categories with which I was already acquainted: a blazered publican now far from the roar of the saloon bar; a grim-faced general practitioner in a suit. I was comforted by the sight of another returnee from my earlier term there. So the scene was reassuring; the only change was in me. From the beginning, that second time, I coddled and protected a small flame of optimism, without daring either to mention it, or even to dwell on it for long in my thoughts. The proposition that I was an alcoholic seemed no longer malign, but liberating. In the language of Alcoholics Anonymous, I had already, without realising it, taken the first "step"; I had accepted that my life was unmanageable, that the label fitted. I was neither eager nor reluctant now to admit this in the conventional manner, should the occasion arise; no act of willpower would be demanded, if it did. Let it be.

That this should have been my state of mind might seem obvious enough, given my recent behaviour. But to look at the matter in such terms is to underestimate the tenacity and durability of the delusions commonly held in the Unit. People were there, in situations as crystal clear in their implications as my own, who had not taken that "step"; or rather, since it felt to me like a gift, on whom it had not been bestowed. Even if they grudgingly conceded that they were alcoholics, they had no sense of the utility of that description, of the possibilities it opened up.

And so for me, now at the right starting-place, or even halfway down the course, the routines and procedures of the treatment began all over again. A minimum of medication—a few pills to cope with malnourishment, and a few more to quell the shakes—and afterwards the familiar round of meetings, compulsory attendance at AA one evening a week, the Friday night "social" with the ladies (about a dozen of them and thirty of us), and, after a time, the week-end leaves. In some respects it was pleasant. Companionship and routine make a good mix, especially for those who have denied themselves both. Among all this there was very little one-to-one therapy, no lying on couches, no long colloquies with psychiatrists. The one doctor on duty was sometimes invisible for days on end, and the consultant psychiatrist came about once a week.

Sometimes a patient at his own request (I never saw it happening to a woman) was given aversion therapy. Barrack-room wit ("Don't be vague, ask for Haig") was prompted by the sight of a drinks trolley, its bottles and glasses gleaming and clinking down the corridor to a room where someone was being induced to vomit on drinking it—a cruelly encapsulated replay of much previous experience. But this practice was not common, and indeed struck me as an aberration, even a betrayal of the Unit's real nature. And even the other bits of applied science—the blood tests, urine samples, checks for liver damage, and so on—important though they were, I felt to be peripheral. We were assured that alcoholism was an "illness", but in practice that metaphor was not sustained. It was clear that the battle with this "disease" was not to be won with the technologies of medical science, but in a moral and spiritual domain, one in which the conditioned reflex hardly belonged.

WE WERE TO BE GIVEN the opportunity to choose. To this end, we were exposed to a kind of crash course in alcoholism, its psychological roots, and its human consequences. Furthermore, we were to provide this for ourselves, by a process of learning by discovery. A great deal of the talk at St Bernard's, at meal-times, doing the washing-up, at AA, in and out of meetings, was of course about booze and its associated problems. It made up in its entirety a lurid and overwhelming panorama of the Drinking Classes at work in British society. We learned about the habits and proprieties of park-bench meths drinkers, and of the subterfuges of middle-class ladies. We heard from those who had nosed their way to jobs in the industry—the night-worker who drank himself to stupefaction in a brewery; the barman who set himself up with half-a-bottle of vodka before beginning his working and drinking day. There was a pathetic clergyman; a ship's purser who fell victim to the Duty Free; a British Railways steward who stole the miniatures for all-night sessions in some secret den at Euston Station; the dentist who drank away the shakes each morning before tackling the first patient; the quiet string-player who did the same before rehearsals. There were Irishmen from the building trade; a well-known trade-union official; an Indian businessman; even an air-traffic controller. And through all the tales there ran the thread of moral and social disaster, lost jobs, rent arrears, disturbed children, brushes with the law, drunken driving, accidents, bounced cheques, fiddles, tax evasion, domestic turmoil, illness, litigation, theft, divorce. . . .

PRODUCED 2005 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Sometimes in these stories we would see our own pain and listen to our own fears or catch with a tremor of recognition some unnervingly familiar trick which somehow contrived to shift the responsibility for it all on to others: most frequently, our wives. The intention was that we should serve each other as mirrors in which we might discern the general nature of our condition, the shape of the wood itself rather than the impenetrable local thickets in which we were separately impaled. For me this indeed did begin to happen, and I found myself scrutinising my own chance remarks, attempting to discover their covert intent. Altogether it amounted to a kind of elementary education in ordinary, secular morality.

BUT THERE WERE OTHER THINGS which went on in St Bernard's which reached well beyond this, to the plane of the properly "religious". The recovery programme of Alcoholics Anonymous is structured in a series of "steps", beginning with the neophyte's acceptance of his alcoholism and moving onwards from there to (second step) a belief that a "power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity" or (fourth step) to "a fearless and searching moral inventory", and thence, through modes of thinking which imply the need for acts of amendment or atonement, to a state of mind in which serving others, other alcoholics for example, has become important. This disciplined progression away from the self is, I suppose, similar to those in other manuals of the religious life, like, for example, the Spiritual Exercises of St Ignatius.

An AA meeting itself, many of which I attended at the hospital, and a few afterwards, is evangelical in character. It begins and ends with the AA prayer: "*God grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change. Courage to change the things I can. And the wisdom to know the difference.*" After the prayer a speaker, as part of a "step" in his own recovery, addresses the meeting. This testimony takes a confessional form, and includes an account of the speaker's former debasement, describes the process of recovery, and ends with some words about the contentment, and sometimes even the material benefits, which are now his lot. There is no preaching, but within a short space of time we are exposed to an often vivid account of suffering, followed by a revelation of what—if we choose wisely—can be ours. For old hands the purpose is reinforcement: for those still in trouble, conversion. All very reminiscent, I thought, of the Welsh Nonconformist prayer-meetings of my own childhood, especially in the way other speakers, some quite venerable in the length and dignity of their sobriety, rise like elders of the chapel to lend their weight to what has been said. A good meeting ends in a spirit of warmth and fellowship, handshakes all round.

The weekly AA meeting was seen as an event of real importance in the life of the Unit, but it differed from other such meetings in one important way. It was conducted and attended by a group of Old Boys, so to speak, and we, the current generation of inmates, sat at the back as observers. Voluntary patients or not, we felt we were there under duress, pressed men, and as such we were sometimes resentful, and hence critical of what went on, given to dissecting the inadequacies of the speakers with a sharpness to which we were hardly entitled.

We watched the procedures as outsiders, chipping in occasionally with remarks from our own, unreformed, world. Much of what we said was tangential or crass. We quibbled, unbelievably, about minor points of fact (bus routes; prices), or tiny inconsistencies in the stories we heard. Sometimes we were argumentative. "Why do we have to be anonymous, if it's a disease?" I remember asking. "You don't keep tonsillitis quiet." We joked like schoolboys, *sotto voce*. The evangelical flavour of the meeting, its touches of naivety, the *Reader's Digest* style of some of its slogans—all this was not to the taste of the worldlings among us.

During my second spell in the hospital I allowed myself none of this, without ever feeling a sense of fellowship with the AA meeting. Apart from my time at St Bernard's it has not played a part in my recovery, though for many it is indispensable. It is as if I stand only on the first "step" of its scheme: fortunately, the all-important one. But I did, and do, perceive that organisation to be wholly benign, and rich in experience; therefore any disdain I might have felt for its methods now seems to me impertinent. Even that second time, I remember toying with the idea of setting up a BBC branch of AA: a more intellectually congenial, Brompton Oratory version, as it were. The whole point of AA—the recognition of what is common about alcoholism, and its anyway profoundly equalising nature—had at that late stage still eluded me.

But there it was, at the very centre of the Unit's life, its purposes endorsed by psychiatrists. It was, I felt, as if the Gospel Hall had been given the imprimatur of the Royal Society. Nor was AA the only element of the religious informing our routines. Many of our meetings, I recall, were chaired by a self-effacing but austere Anglican clergyman, whose interests I assumed to be in our moral and spiritual condition. He too never preached, but he gazed around us impassively on these occasions, as though contemplating some particularly lucid paradigm of the fallen human condition. I remember too once overhearing the eminent psychiatrist who had established the Unit, saying to a patient as we walked out of a meeting: "Miracles can happen—let's hope they do", and he added the words "But of course you will have to work for them." Faith and Works.

THERE ARE other forms of psychotherapy similarly committed to the digging-out of truths, but none I know in which this pursuit is characterised in such traditionally religious terms. There are now professionals in Britain and elsewhere who act on principles less charged with spirituality. They are sceptical about some of the methods used at St Bernard's and similar places, and even dissent controversially from the insistence in all cases on total abstemiousness. Thus they deny a central article of the AA faith: "Once an alcoholic, always an alcoholic." They offer instead a system of out-patient counselling which is often directed to more limited goals and which, the evidence suggests, is more effective and much cheaper than three months in a traditional addiction unit.

PRODUCED 2005 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

I feel no sense of having missed out, and can only record that in my own case, and at the time, alcoholism *felt* like a state of moral and spiritual failure; that the help given to me was, though not what I expected, experienced as fitting; that it was couched in the right terms, and was matched, I suspect in a significant way, to my own temperament and background. The condition of alcoholism is in part culturally defined, and it seems reasonable that its treatment should find expression in those cultural forms which make sense to those who suffer from it.

THE SECULAR DOCTRINES which we were also invited to discover can be summarised. Alcoholics were prone to self-deception, to an inability to locate the source of their troubles in themselves, attributing them instead to others: frigid wives, unfeeling husbands, impossible parents. They were over-dependent, and had difficulty in their relationships. They were given to self-pity, and to anger, which last they often repressed (though they were also violent). They were immature, even infantile, and therefore egotistical. They were fearful of rebuff, self-protecting, and therefore reluctant to grasp nettles. Above all, they lacked self-knowledge, and were, as a result, manipulative and dishonest. It was implied, I think, that these characteristics were, if not inherent, at least antecedent—the cause of the patient's drinking, though now writ large by its practice. Some form of moral reconstruction was called for.

Anyone who has known a very heavy drinker will recognise this description, and it gives a fair account of much of my own behaviour. It takes no account—or for practical purposes chooses to ignore—certain other profound influences. (Our Unit, for example, was well provided with Celts, but the only Jew I met was the consultant psychiatrist.) It also describes many people who are not addicts, and it seems to me to be on shaky ground in its suggestion that these deplorable characteristics are somehow the marks of a predisposing "alcoholic personality", rather than acquired by the practice of drinking. At the time, though, I did not inquire too curiously into all this, forgoing the pleasures of speculation. Some of us, so inclined, browsed in the professional literature, but it seemed to me prudent not to follow that track.

I felt this especially because those who did sometimes found texts which, at a pinch, bore the interpretation that there were solutions less absolute than total abstinence: a view totally at variance with what we were being told, and one on which they pounced with ominous relish. Knowledge in itself was of little use. I remembered once meeting a journalist in a West End drinking-club, who had in his pocket a battered and heavily annotated copy of a Pelican book on alcoholism, his study of which bore no visible results. I remembered again an oft-repeated remark of my mother's: "You may be educated, but you don't know how to *live*." Its Welsh intensity had amused me, but the judgment now seemed the plain truth. So, if there were contrarieties, omissions and puzzles in what I was hearing, they too, I felt, could be left simply to be.

Such were my thoughts and feelings after two or three weeks of that second term. I wanted to stop drinking, and, being on the look-out for whatever meanings the place offered, found sermons in its stones and morals where they had not been planted. I was, like a tennis player, trying not to try, letting the processes of the treatment do their work in me. In a way, I was already "better"—the substance of what the Unit taught I had already grasped intellectually that first time, and my collapse into drunkenness after that had, I guessed, been a necessary experience, a fixing of it in my mind. From now on it was a matter of letting the new cargo I had taken on board settle down, yare and secure. Two other experiences—both, in a sense literary—were to be of help in this respect.

No one was officially discharged from the hospital until they had written their "life story", a 20- or 30-minute piece touching on their childhood and family background, their current hopes and feelings, and their drinking history. Every week two or three people rendered these accounts of themselves publicly at a full meeting of the group. These occasions were a kind of passing-out ceremony, moments of truth, and were conducted with appropriate seriousness. Again, the stories left us with powerful images. I still retain the picture we were given of the owner of a fish-and-chip shop—fearful, drunk, sweating and accident-prone—shovelling out the orders between backstairs swigs on his vodka bottle. The surface details of this image bear no relation to anything in my own experience, and yet it has since had for me an unforgettable relevance. But the important thing about the life stories lay in the general impression they made, in their style and tone. What was the nature of the feelings implied in the language used? Were those feelings authentic, or ones to which the narrator was entitled? These were the kind of questions we pursued in our discussions, in which terms like "phoney" or "bullshit" or even "immature" were used. If the AA meetings took me back to the Chapel, these put me in mind of another setting in which the Puritan spirit had moved—the seminars in practical criticism I had attended while studying English Literature at Cambridge, some twenty years earlier.

THE STORIES demonstrated once again how problematical were some of the claims once made about the links between literature and life. Honesty, maturity, and so on were not notably present in the life stories of people with literary leanings. I remember, for example, a journalist who began his with, roughly, the following words:

> "My earliest memories are of Mother screaming at Father; and of Adolf Hitler shouting on the radio."

And I remember too the look of mild despair on the face of the consultant psychiatrist as he listened to this. My own effort, that first time certainly, was poor. It was, I recall, indefatigably and bewilderingly complicated, ranging over such diverse themes as breast-feeding; the hypocrisies of Welsh nonconformity; the deracinating effects of upward social mobility and its associated guilts . . . and more in this vein. It is possible that I touched on some genuine problems, but I somehow missed the point, and the effect of all this on my

PRODUCED 2005 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

audience was that of some overwrought contrivance, which was designed, they implied, to promote an image of myself as fearlessly unconventional, unique, different, and special.

SOME TIME IN the middle of my second term, I found myself reading rather than listening to another moving and disturbing story. It was *Recovery*, John Berryman's thinly fictionalised account of his own experience in an alcohol treatment centre in the United States. I have never read a book which addressed itself so directly to my own immediate and vital interests, and which dealt, often with great insight, with the very experience I was undergoing while reading it. The book had come out in England a year or two earlier, not long after Berryman's suicide.

I was already an admirer of Berryman's poetry, and for obvious reasons was interested when the novel came my way. The place Berryman describes in it was more American in style than ours, with its touches of fashionable psychodrama and its even greater elevation of AA into near-sacred status. But all the same it was still grippingly recognisable. I knew, of course, that Berryman had killed himself, and that the book's title had been over-optimistic. I read it then in a state of some anxiety and fear, scanning the text for clues and signposts which would help me on my way; almost as a kind of cautionary tale. I have not read the book since, but the effect it made is easy to recall. Much of the writing struck me as marvellously vivid, particularly the portraits Berryman gives of the other patients, all seen in a commanding yet compassionate glance of the poet's eye. I was impressed too by Berryman's interest and curiosity in them all, and by the energetic and egalitarian zest with which this distinguished man threw himself into their lives. And most of all I noticed his grave preoccupation with religion. My own inner life at the time seemed lacking in depth and quality; my relationships with my fellow patients, in comparison, cool. And yet this good man, dismayingly, had failed. What chance had I?

He had put himself unreservedly into the hands of "a power greater than himself". He had "levelled" at many meetings. But he had not been restored to sanity. Perhaps, it occurred to me, with some heterodoxy, he had tried too hard. I began to find in the book a struggling and tortured element, a kind of holy ambition, as if Berryman were aspiring to a condition of sainthood, and not simply to giving up alcohol. The religious parts began to seem not grave but pumped up, and his spiritual wrestlings seemed too evidently perceived as of cosmic significance.

I concluded this self-serving reading by deciding that there had been something deeply mistaken in his choosing so quickly to turn his experience into "copy", indeed into Art, as though that exalted status would be a guarantee of its reality, when in truth the effect was to diminish it. My judgments, like all of their kind, were "impure", perhaps abnormally contaminated by the urgencies of my own situation; certainly they served their immediate and utilitarian purpose. I took what I could get, and from Berryman I learned that I was under no obligation to join a humility race or competition, and that I had to cut my coat according to my cloth, and see what happened.

Things did happen. After a few weeks at St Bernard's, the joke went, you felt so good that you needed a drink to celebrate. My own health returned as though indeed borne on some warm fluid which was finding its own way through my body, carrying with it messages of reassurance, inexplicable feelings of well-being. I lay in bed at night, contentedly alert to these pleasing sensations. They came not only from the good physical health I was now enjoying again, but from the sense, already there, of having accomplished something. And they took a further charge from the closeness of the lives being lived around me, from those dark shapes beneath the blankets whose emotions were so similar to my own, and whose thoughts I felt I could almost hear. In the mornings when we got up I was struck and moved by the normalcy of our lives: by the way, for example, we laid claims to dignity and respect through finding pleasure in the performance of small duties (making the tea; fetching the papers; running the snooker ladder). At work in the Unit was a profoundly sane impulse towards social order, with its safe and predictable rhythms, and to find this primal virtue in this, of all places, and in myself, added further to my sense of freedom and power.

AND THAT really is all. I returned to my work, this time wholly indifferent to the occasional stare. I have had not the slightest trouble with alcohol since, neither drinking nor being tempted to do so, and abstinence has become as habitual as drunkenness once was. No tablets and no "will-power" have been called for. For a short time I went to a few AA meetings, more to pay my respects to St Bernard's than to seek support. For a year or two I had dreams about being drunk, but these too have long gone. I feel no aversion to the presence of alcohol, and provide it for friends, and though occasionally the whiff of a good bottle of wine produces a momentary feeling of regret, the sensation has never seemed to bring me near any danger point. The idea of controlled drinking, with its meticulous monitoring of intake levels, has no attractions; it seems to be more trouble than it could possibly be worth. I try to avoid smugness, and my tolerance for drunks is still fairly high. Anything less would be unacceptable for someone with my record; and even when frozen by boredom I am grateful to them for reminding me of how terrible I must have been. One minor problem is fighting off insistent hosts who don't know me—it involves either lying or dramatic self-exposure.

THE SUCCESS RATE in the treatment of alcoholism is not impressive; and much cheaper methods than those that benefited me are being developed. No one in these times is likely to wish to subsidise places like St Bernard's for their intrinsic value. So my experience will perhaps become increasingly less common, like that of having had a classical education. In a sense, I was privileged.

PRODUCED 2005 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Graeme Wilson

Early Japanese Poems

Cicadas

So high these summer mountains
And the tops of their trees so high
That, when their insects shrill to each other
Challenge and reply,
It is as though cicada-sound
Were all we have for sky.

Kakinomoto no Hitomaro (*681-729*)

Moroto

Moroto tells me, over and over,
Over and over again,
How much she loves me. Ah, Moroto,
How many have lain
Here in your arms, as drunk as I
Upon lie-champagne.

Otomo no Yakamochi (*718-785*)

Modesty

You claim to be so modest
And I will not say you lie,
But no one wears a scarlet skirt
Expecting to get by
Without attracting notice
From the quicker kinds of eye.

Anonymous (*8th century*)

Keepsake

That keepsake which you gave me. . . .

Once I had thought you kind
So to ease the pain of our parting,
But now I find
That, of intent, you have given me nothing
But a thistle in the mind.

Anonymous (*9th century*)

Disobedient Head

Because I hoped so hard
To dream you shared my bed
All night long I tossed and turned,
Wakefully dead
To that marvellous world I knew still there
In my disobedient head.

Anonymous (*10th century*)

The Nature of Existence

So we exist. What of it?
Where, if not here, is here?

But the nature of existence
Shines pitiably clear
In the way that morning-glory flowers
Appear and disappear.

Izumi Shikibu (*974-c.1033*)

PRODUCED 2005 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Green Love

No matter how one darks oneself
—And I've tried, I've tried—
The love-thoughts that transluce the flesh
Are as hard to hide
As those green lights which a firefly's body
Suffers from inside.

Anonymous (*10th century*)

Mid October

The mind of a person waking
To a mid-October day
Is distanced from itself. Expectably,
Some would say;
That being the month when the sky is always
At its farthest away.

Fujiwara no Kenshi (*1000-?*)

Plum Flowers

I passed the flowering plum-trees
And, passing, did not know
Until I smelt their lack of scent
That every flower was snow.

Priest Saigyo (*1118-1190*)

Lust Denied

I have become a kind of darkness.

If what I tried
To think was love was love indeed,
Then love has died
And all that lives is the demon born
Out of lust denied.

Zeami Motokyo (*1365-1444*)

Lotte Kramer

New Year's Eve

We hardly noticed that old knotty tramp
Wolfing his food (a place near Leicester Square)

Until there crossed a steel of voices, rush
Of shoes: "Two pounds you owe us, you'll not go

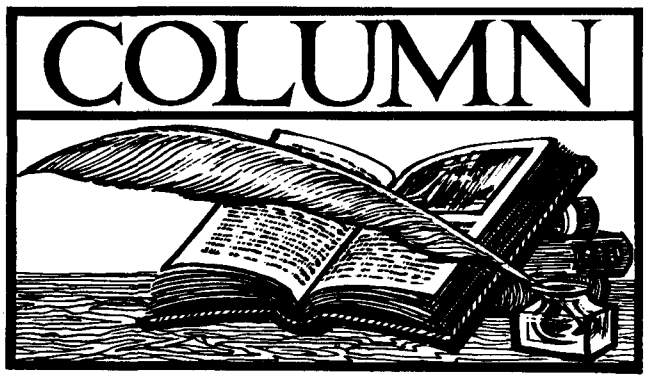
Before you've paid!" He rumbled broken words,
Half sentences, tried running to the door

But fists came clamping down to trap him, push
Him to the basement stairs; one final kick,

Threat of police, was all we heard. Cowards,
We were, who sipped the year's last cup of tea

In silent fellow-travellership when faced
With hunger, cruelty, our undone deeds.

PRODUCED 2005 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED



"THE NATURAL TENDENCY of representative government, as of modern civilisation, is towards collective mediocrity." Hilaire Belloc? Saki? Benjamin Disraeli? Benedetto Croce? Norman Podhoretz? Peregrine Worsthorne? . . . No: none of them. The élitist in question was John Stuart Mill.

His remark seemed especially relevant this past summer. In various quarters, passionate debates homed in on leadership, *raison d'état*, and the role of experts who supposedly know best. In Washington, Colonel Oliver North made the best case possible for bypassing Congressional control of twilit foreign policy. In London, *The Sunday Times* defied the Government's farcical efforts to ban *Spycatcher*, the memoirs of its former spook Peter Wright. In Middlesbrough, England, child-care professionals were accused of excessive zeal in removing children from parents suspected of maltreating them. And in Britain's SDP-Liberal Alliance, post-electoral depression erupted into furious rows. Tough-minded Social Democrats accused some Liberals of weak and woolly Leftism, while the SDP itself divided into those who sought union with the Liberal Party and those who feared for the SDP's political identity in any likely merger.

On all these issues, I suspect, many people were divided too. President Reagan, echoing Laurel and Hardy, may have privately muttered, "That's another fine mess you got us out of, Ollie": but the rest of the Administration had cause to disagree. While covert operations must clearly be kept under wraps, lack of supervision can obviously lead to policy goof-offs and SNAFUS. So, on the other hand, can intemperate reactions to security leaks—trying to bolt innumerable stable doors, *pour décourager les autres*, long after the *KGB* has won the Derby. And no less serious mistakes, it seems, can be made if social workers and magistrates have *carte blanche* to sequester children from allegedly violent or incestuous homes. After several tragic instances of too little protection for children, paediatricians are right to be very vigilant; yet laws which can forbid parental access or even appeal would seem to have handed too much power to the experts, some of whom have even denied that parents have "rights".

Equally, many members of the SDP found themselves torn between the appeal of unity with the Liberals and the fear of J. S. Mill's "collective mediocrity". The election performance of the Liberal leader David Steel—rejecting, on radio and off the cuff, without prior SDP agreement, any coalition with Mrs Thatcher—seemed deplorably disloyal and silly. The Social Democratic Party's David Owen, by contrast, seemed to have been saying almost all the right things: *No* to trade-union excesses, *Yes* to Council tenants' opportunity to buy their homes, *Yes* to competition but with a safety-net for the victims of change. To some of his colleagues and allies, Dr Owen must often have seemed maddeningly infallible.

And then he blew it. Faced with David Steel's proposal that the SDP and the Liberals should both dissolve, and form a joint Alliance party, he made exactly the same mistake as Mr Steel had made over coalition with Mrs Thatcher: he precipitately said *No*.

It was certainly characteristic. Anyone less contemptuous of what Dr Owen rather oddly calls "fudge and mudge" would surely have been happy—and wise—to take the line favoured by Roy Jenkins, Shirley Williams, Bill Rodgers, David Marquand, Dick Taverne, and others: *i.e.*, to unite with the Liberals in a new party, but only if the terms were right. The "terms" envisaged include internal organisation like that of the SDP, with one-member-one-vote policy-making, to prevent caucus politics and take-overs by minority extremes. But, far from endorsing this wary but positive proposal, David Owen seemed even to reject the chance of leading any merged party. Shortly afterwards, an opinion poll revealed that most SDP merger supporters would have liked him at its head.

Part of the dispute concerned constitutional issues. Dr Owen and his anti-merger group stressed that they saw the SDP as something essentially new, and the Alliance as a harbinger of less polarised politics. Knowing that they were unlikely to win an outright majority under Britain's first-past-the-post electoral system, they aimed for a pivotal role, with a casting vote between Labour and the Conservatives. This would not only make for moderation and centrist policies: it could also be used to insist on proportional representation and thereby to inaugurate coalition politics. To those who claimed that this would mean indecisive government, its supporters riposted that Britain had suffered far too long from confrontational politics, with opposing Governments alternating, often on a minority of the popular vote, each pledged to undo the work of its opponents, and making common cause only in time of war.

Many outside Dr Owen's circle no doubt echoed these sentiments; but hard-core anti-merger spokesmen feared that some Liberals, as well as pro-merger Social Democrats, had not shaken off traditional two-party assumptions, and were really aiming to become a Mark I, Gaitskellite Labour Party which might replace the Kinnock or post-Kinnock party as the main alternative to the Tories. That too seemed to many a respectable ideal; so the feeling remained that anti-merger SDP supporters had more than constitutional theory on their minds.

AND OF COURSE they had. What really alarmed the harder-nosed SDP members were the antics of some Liberals, often described *à la Orwell* as "the sandal-wearing brigade". Long accustomed to life in the political wilderness, they were thought to prize purity rather than power, to be better at moving points of order than at shifting public opinion, and

PRODUCED 2005 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

above all to espouse every worthy but daffy cause from veganism to social credit. To be honest, I know a few Liberals like that; but every party has its eccentric minorities. More disquieting, to SDP onlookers, was that minority of Liberals which at the Party's Eastbourne conference had brought it close to endorsing unilateral nuclear disarmament.

Admittedly, in a merged Alliance Party, the unilateralists would be a smaller minority still. Admittedly, with SDP-style policy-making procedures, unilateralism would be most unlikely to prevail. But, haunted by past experience and countless lost votes, the anti-merger faction of the Social Democrats had every reason to distrust some of their allies. It was all the more serious in so far as Labour, despite its new packaging and attempts at a new image, had still not abandoned a "defence policy" unworthy of the name.

So the decision to vote for or against merger was difficult, as the final count showed. The damage done to the Alliance may be possible to repair; but one paradoxical aspect of the whole imbroglio is that the defence controversy was already looking dated when it took place. *Trident* is now going ahead, as David Steel soon acknowledged; and, more fundamentally, there are new, tougher, and more complex questions urgently calling for an answer. What needs to be discussed and decided is no longer just Britain's deterrent capability, but the security of Europe and the future shape of the Atlantic Alliance itself.

THE SO-CALLED "Zero Option", a.k.a. the US-Soviet Euromissile deal, is the obvious trigger for radical rethinking; but other factors have helped to make it overdue. Increased prosperity in Western Europe, now nearly matching America's, makes US citizens wonder why their Government spends $100,000 million a year on Europe's security. Forty-two years of peace make them, and some Europeans, question the need for 300,000 American servicemen on European soil. The Mansfield and Nunn amendments, though defeated, were symptomatic; and the latest straw in the same wind is a bipartisan commission expected to recommend that US defence policy should focus more on non-European parts of the world. Meanwhile, *glasnost* has a Siren appeal for many wistful Europeans; and Mr Gorbachov himself may well hope to reduce Soviet defence costs in order to spend more productively.

This is not to suggest, as some seem to imagine, that the time has come to forget deterrence, dismantle the Alliance, and revive General de Gaulle's rhetorical dream of a Europe from the Atlantic to the Urals. "*Glasnost*", as several linguists have pointed out, means "publicity" as well as "openness"; and Mr Gorbachov has military men and other sceptics to deal with at home. Europeans cannot afford to base their security on optimistic newspaper forecasts of future events in Moscow. Like it or not, they must still rely on deterring possible aggression.

Nor is it sensible to suggest that America is about to let Europe drop. The Atlantic Alliance will undoubtedly continue: so will the global deterrent. To that extent, nervousness about the Zero Option may be misplaced. Nevertheless, things they are a-changing; and they may change badly if Europeans shirk some hard decisions.

Imagine a nightmare scenario. The next President of the United States turns out to be a closet isolationist. His attitude is strengthened by growing protectionism and a well-publicised row with Europe over farm subsidies. Trouble in Latin America, the Middle East, and perhaps Korea leads to calls for "a more conspicuous US presence"—advisers, money, offshore ships and troops. Congress stalls: so men are pulled out of Europe. Meanwhile, the Zero Option has weakened theatre deterrence. But Europeans, lulled by *glasnost* and Gorbachov, do nothing to repair the cracks in their security. Then comes a Kremlin palace revolution. . . .

I'VE LEFT OUT several jokers, of the kind one finds in thrillers: mad Generals, assassins, kidnappers, terrorists, wily Oriental fanatics. Any of them could turn insecurity into catastrophe. But insecurity is bad enough—and, unless Governments look ahead, that is what we may face.

Fortunately, there have been signs this summer that France and Germany, at least, may be quietly reconsidering their position. When de Gaulle left NATO and turfed NATO out of France, French policy embraced "defence against all points of the compass", and there was no question of its "beginning on the Elbe" rather than the Rhine. Admittedly, France never formally quit the Alliance; and there was more coordination within it than successive French Governments publicised. But NATO had to scrap its original plans for using French troops in a counter-attack on any Soviet invasion, and aim instead at blocking any invaders as far to the East as possible.

For several years, influential French strategists have questioned that Gaullist legacy. The Paris Establishment tacitly shelved "defence against all points of the compass". Discreet contacts began to be made with Germany. Ideas once heterodox began to surface again. And in May of this year a distinguished group of 22 French experts, all but five of them Ambassadors or Generals, drew up a report on the Zero Option calling for radical revision of official French policy.

"To play its proper role", the *Groupe Renouveau Défense* declared, "to be able to take the initiatives which are needed, France must abandon the last of the taboos which paralyse her. She must in particular take a full part in the work of the Alliance . . . by rejoining the NATO Planning Committee." On forward defence, "if France wants to carry weight in the debate on the Zero Option, she must today proclaim loud and clear that her defence 'begins on the Elbe', and that she is prepared, in concert with her allies, to enlarge her strategic thinking to include 'forward deterrence'." As one French commentator remarked:

> "By proposing that France should commit herself immediately alongside her allies in the case of a Soviet attack on German territory, and by drawing all the conclusions that this determination implies, the report recommends a fundamental change in French strategy."

Nor was the Group's attention confined to the policy of France. The proper response to the Zero Option, it argued, was "a responsible Europe, capable of discussing security

PRODUCED 2005 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

with the United States in a concerted fashion (as it has never done before), and able to play the appropriate role in its own defence." "The Europeans", it concluded soberly, "will have the Americans they deserve."

ACROSS THE RHINE, similar thoughts were stirring. They culminated most notably in Chancellor Helmut Kohl's proposal, in June, of a joint Franco-German brigade. To be in NATO or not to be—that was the question most commentators asked; but President François Mitterrand, while ruling out the return of French troops to NATO command, added, gnomically, "If one looks, one finds". Earlier, in February, the former Chancellor Helmut Schmidt, backed by the former French President Valéry Giscard d'Estaing, had been looking even further—towards a possible merger of French and German non-nuclear forces.

If not a pipe-dream, this may well be premature. But with mounting pressure to reduce US troop levels in Europe, and a growing need to keep European deterrence credible, Europeans must surely make their conventional defences more effective. One way of doing so without much bigger budgets would be to coordinate their weaponry and redeploy their troops. Some French soldiers, who this September have been on joint Franco-German manoeuvres in the Federal Republic, could be stationed there permanently; so could units from Spain. And if each country in Europe bought its hardware from the most economic supplier, whether national or not, both economy and unity would be served.

Again, ideas like this may seem utopian. The European Defence Community, devised by treaty in 1952, failed to come into being: it fell in the French National Assembly in 1954. Since then, various trial balloons have been launched in the hope of reviving it—including the idea of combining the French and British nuclear deterrents. Every time, the stumbling-block has been national sovereignty, cited in different guises, but always fundamentally the same old Adam, or John Bull, or Marianne.

Could the time be ripe for a new initiative? The European Community has come a long way since 1954. Then, it was confined to coal and steel; now, it embraces the whole economy, and works alongside political cooperation. Then, it had six member States; now, it has twelve, and includes Britain. Then, it had a small nominated Common Assembly; now, it has a European Parliament, directly elected. Meanwhile, the world has changed. In 1954, Stalin had been dead one year; Eisenhower was in his second year as President. The Atlantic Alliance was five years old, and *Sputnik* was still three years ahead.

In 1987, it may just be possible for Europe to replace collective mediocrity with collective common sense.

M

Barbus Vulgaris

(for Ian, d. August 1982)

He'd take the piss.
So there's no sense in tackling up
with poncey words we'd never use
if he were here.

Living through his death's a swine,
his worst debunking. Here I am
a parody. I wear the look
he stared with when he *knew*.
Each ache and sneeze is terminal.

Since his last words—*long time,*
he said (he said it twice),
before we fish again—a hooked
and frenzied thing has jerked
inside my throat; I've worried
oesophageal reflux and catarrh
to ten times worse, imagined
lumps. . . .

Now, behind his back, I'm paying dues,
thanking him for fishing skills,
while all I have's a squeamishness,
some luck with words, a sullen
promise: soon as I am fit

a double-figure barbel for his sake.

Matt Simpson

PRODUCED 2005 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Victor Hugo

On The Legacy of Myth—By RENEE WINEGARTEN

"On entre donc plus profondément encore dans l'âme des peuples et dans l'histoire intérieure des sociétés humaines par la vie littéraire que par la vie politique."
VICTOR HUGO, **Choses vues**

ONE OF THE least inspiring productions of Richard Wagner's prolific career was a distasteful satire on Victor Hugo and the privations endured by the besieged Parisians in 1870-71 during the Franco-Prussian War. There, a chorus chants "Rats with sauce! Sauce with rats!" and Victor Hugo keeps emerging from the sewers, after Jean Valjean in the epic novel *Les Misérables*. Ultimately, the French poet soars over Paris in a balloon in the guise of France's dubious guardian angel.

As it happens, this was not the only link between two equally ardent nationalists: the Composer who, with opposition to the French in mind, lauded the supremacy of "holy German art" at the end of *The Mastersingers of Nuremberg*; and the Poet who once heard a voice saying that "France must take back the Rhine!", and who came to embody the spirit of the Republic and of French resistance to the Germans. Moreover, in a footnote to biographical literature that would have titillated Sainte-Beuve and irritated Proust, both Wagner and Hugo enjoyed the favours of Théophile Gautier's beautiful daughter, Judith, who clearly had a penchant for men of genius in their declining years.

The association of Wagner's name with Hugo's may at first appear unlikely. The poet can be seen more readily as the (often unwilling) provider of source material for Italian composers: Verdi (*Ernani, Rigoletto*), Donizetti (*Lucrezia Borgia*), or Ponchielli (*La Gioconda*), through whose operas his dramas—*Hernani, Le Roi s'amuse, Lucrèce Borgia, Angélo, tyran de Padoue*—have survived in gutted form for an international public. Yet a number of great writers, in the 19th century and after, were struck by similarities between Wagner and Hugo, two mighty exponents of the egotistical sublime. Not least among these was Nietzsche, for whom, after he thought he had broken free of Wagner's spell, they were both supreme performers:

> "Like Victor Hugo, [Wagner] remained true to himself even in his autobiography—he remained an actor."

Elsewhere, Nietzsche commented on "the great charlatanry of Victor Hugo and Richard Wagner" coupled with their genuine virtuosity. Certainly they shared a love of the grandiose and the grand gesture, carrying the theatrical into their own lives, and in that sense, Nietzsche's assessment of them as actors is just, even if we might not care to give the word quite the pejorative emphasis that it appears to have in the philosopher's mind.

ABOVE ALL, Nietzsche saw Wagner, the one-time active revolutionary in the Dresden uprising of 1849, and Victor Hugo, the tireless advocate of humanitarian causes, as artists who seduce their public, geniuses who flatter the mob and must have it on their side. He complained that:

> "they become heralds of those feelings with which one moves the masses—the note of sympathy, even reverence, for all that has lived a life of suffering, lowliness, contempt, persecution, sounds above all other notes (types: Victor Hugo and Richard Wagner)."

Here, Nietzsche presumably had *Parsifal* in his sights, for compassion is surely far more rare in Wagner than in Hugo, whose long struggles to convince people of the human dignity and worth of the underdog date from his early years. The poet, that "voluntary exile", consoles suffering humanity, declared Hugo in the very first poem of his first collection, *Odes*. A few years later, he proclaimed his deep hatred of oppression. It was inevitable that Nietzsche, with his aesthetic cult of aristocratic values, should have seen in Hugo a leading representative of one of the major trends of the modern age—what he called haughtily the "moralistic mendaciousness" of modern man, the "siding with the oppressed and underprivileged . . . altruism as the most mendacious form of egoism . . ."—in short, an incarnation

PRODUCED 2005 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

of everything the philosopher loathed in his era.[1]

The lifelong humanitarian stance of Hugo was one major source of the hostility as well as the admiration he could inspire, and this effect was not dissimilar to the extremes of adulation and loathing aroused by Wagner. Just as the composer had (and has) the Wagnerites with their cult, so there were the *hugolâtres*, worshippers of the poet, whose legend Marx's son-in-law, Paul Lafargue, once battered in a pamphlet. The public included those who succumbed to seduction and those who refused to be seduced.

Perhaps more consciously than Hugo, Wagner—who owed much of his outlook to the years of hardship he spent in Paris in the 1840s—expressed and appealed to powerful secret emotions and instincts beyond rational understanding and control. Like Wagner, Hugo achieved his dominating seductiveness through myth. Where Wagner had recourse to Teutonic or Celtic legends, Hugo often chose myths that he evolved from history or even created for himself. "Hugo's supreme talent was essentially of a mythopoetic nature", as that discriminating critic, Victor Brombert, has justly observed. With the poet as with the composer, the charmed web of harmonious and hypnotic myth may sometimes conceal an element that, on closer examination, proves to be not just odious but dangerous as well.

Both Hugo and Wagner were not only pillars of excess but proponents of totality, the composer more obviously so in his concept of the all-embracing work of art. As for the poet, he was inclined at first to speak modestly of his wish to embrace everything, to achieve totality. But soon he was claiming that the poet's work should resemble the earth itself, and that "the true poet . . . should contain the sum total of the ideas of his time".[2] There were (as we shall see) profound personal reasons that helped to transform him into the "*écho sonore*" and the sum of the aspirations of an entire era.

One who preceded Nietzsche in linking together the names of Wagner and Hugo was Baudelaire, whose relationship with the creator of *Les Contemplations* was complicated. As a youth, Baudelaire imitated the elder poet, loved him, dedicated poems to him. "Victor Hugo, great, awe-inspiring, vast as a mythic creation, cyclopean, as it were, depicts the forces of nature and their harmonious struggle", wrote Baudelaire, acknowledging Hugo's mythic power in an essay on Théophile Gautier for which he solicited a prefatory letter from the poet of *La Tristesse d'Olympio* himself. "I have never said: Art for Art's sake [replied Olympio, as Hugo became known]. I have always said: Art for the sake of Progress. In reality, they are the same thing. . . ."[3] But they were not at all the same thing for Baudelaire, who could well have felt betrayed. Had not Victor Hugo proclaimed in an influential essay that Art is an end in itself? In the introduction to his dazzling collection of poems on exotic themes, *Les Orientales*, did he not call the work "this useless book of pure poetry"? No matter that in the first preface to his *Odes*, seven years earlier, he had remarked that the aim of every writer is "to be of use (*être utile*)". This risk of being quoted against oneself was inevitable for a poet like Hugo who aimed to be all-inclusive.

For Baudelaire, the uproar at the Wagner concerts in Paris in 1860 and at the opening performances of *Tannhäuser* there in 1861, called to mind the celebrated battle at the première of *Hernani* in 1830. These dates were for him great landmarks in the age's doctrinal conflicts about art. In Baudelaire's opinion, though, Hugo—despite his intense visionary qualities, his potency as "an eye", his awareness of an implacable fate—was blind to things spiritual. In this regard, Hugo appeared inferior to Wagner, the meretriciousness of whose "spirituality" passed unnoticed by Baudelaire. It seems a curious objection to make about Hugo, who never departed from the Pindaric idea of the poet as a *vates*, a prophet, a sacred priest, a divine instrument. The poet "will never be the echo of any word save that of God", claimed Hugo at the age of 22. Later, in lonely exile, he was to be photographed "listening to God", and in his writings he often appeared to have a hotline to the Deity. "I shall see God. See God! Speak to Him! . . . What shall I say? . ." he remarked to a Russian poet as his death approached.[4] This sense of being the Almighty's special confidant would make him transmute his own changing political attitudes into the private communications of divine Providence.

What Baudelaire could not forgive was the fact that Hugo was carried away by enthusiasm of a political or social nature deemed unpropitious to his art. Hugo lacked "*spiritualité*" partly because he neglected the force of original sin, and nowhere was this more evident to Baudelaire than in *Les Misérables*, which he reviewed diplomatically while informing his mother that the novel was "disgusting and idiotic". Eventually, unable to contain his fury any longer, Baudelaire wrote an unsigned letter to the editor of *Le Figaro*, prompted by the politico-literary banquet to honour Hugo on the tercentenary of Shakespeare's birth:

> "You know, Sir, that in 1848 an adulterous alliance was concluded between the literary school of 1830 and democracy, an alliance both unnatural and outlandish. Olympio disowned the celebrated doctrine of *art for art's sake*, and since then, his group and disciples have not stopped preaching about the people, speaking for the people, and revealing themselves at all times the sedulous friends and protectors of the people. 'Tender and profound love for the people!' Since then, everything they approve in literature has assumed a revolutionary and philanthropic cast. Shakespeare is a socialist. He was not aware of it; but never mind. . . ."

---

[1] Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Will to Power* (tr. Walter Kaufmann and R. J. Hollingdale, ed. Kaufmann, 1968), pp. 42, 436, 461; *Postcript* to *The Wagner Case*, in Ernest Newman, *Wagner as Man and Artist* (1960), pp. 28-29. Robert W. Gutman, *Richard Wagner* (1971), pp. 439-40, 627-28.

[2] Victor Hugo, *Préface, Les Orientales* (1829); *Préface, Les Rayons et les ombres* (1840).

[3] Charles Baudelaire, "Théophile Gautier", *Oeuvres complètes* (ed. Le Dantec, 1968), p. 689; Victor Hugo, Letter to Baudelaire, 6 October 1859, pp. 1,666-67.

[4] Victor Hugo, *Préface, Nouvelles Odes* (1824). Alain Ducaux, *Victor Hugo* (1984), p. 1,015.

PRODUCED 2005 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

And Baudelaire, concluding with an outburst against "all the idiocies characteristic of this 19th century in which we have the tiresome good fortune to live . . .",[5] largely anticipated Nietzsche in the tenor of his objections to Hugo's humanitarian views.

However, all those writers who had been enchanted by Hugo's poetry in their early years could never quite erase its mark, whatever subtlety of discrimination they might later bring to bear on it. André Gide's reluctant acknowledgment of Victor Hugo as the greatest French poet ("*hélas*") is notorious. Well acquainted with Nietzsche as he was, Gide, too, remarked that Hugo shared faults with Wagner. Yet the author of *L'Immoraliste* was not at all gratified when the Greek-born poet Jean Moréas spoke of Hugo "with rather contemptuous arrogance, which in any case is merely a front."[6] As late as 1929, Gide could still be found rereading Hugo's poetry before going to sleep, finding that he remembered the verses he had learned by heart long before. "Such masterly ease . . .", he mused. Gide was lost in admiration at Hugo's technical resource.

Another who stayed faithful to his early literary allegiance was Proust, who frequently quotes Hugo in *A la Recherche du temps perdu*. His narrator and *alter ego* "Marcel"—who also admires Wagner without expressing Nietzschean scruples—holds forth on Hugo to the indifferent Albertine. In his *roman-fleuve*, Proust ridicules members of good society who continue to betray a modish, ignorant lack of appreciation for Hugo, an attitude often tinged with political animosity. Marcel's admiration for what he calls Hugo's more oblique later manner—that of *La Légende des siècles*, closely associated in his mind with Wagner's second manner and its lack of "arias"—was profound. Here, Hugo is displayed as the creator of a new literature, "endowed with instruments of greater complexity".[7]

THE CONNECTION BETWEEN Hugo and Wagner, regarded as commanding giants of art in the 19th century, thus reveals two strains: on the one hand, a gift of innovation and virtuosity together with a power of seduction that sweeps all before it; on the other, a political and social element which stirs great and lasting controversy. Hugo was not only a poet, dramatist, and novelist, but also a lifelong acute political observer, "an incomparable recorder" (Gide), and a telling social witness, as his enthralling notebooks and diaries, known as *Choses vues*, testify. Unlike Wagner, who as an activist descended only briefly into the political arena, Hugo became an active politician; he was elected *député* on a number of occasions, and he took his duties very seriously indeed.

"I am a Conscience. . . ."

"Je suis une conscience. . . ."
Odes et Ballades (*1880*)

WITH HUGO and many of his generation, humanitarian commitment moves to a central position in the writer's concerns. Today, alas, the advocacy of "humanitarian" causes in the broadest sense of the term has been hijacked. Sometimes, it has declined into a pose or a gesture of radical chic. It can thus awaken certain misgivings even in those who are far from endorsing the aesthetic-aristocratic and anti-modern strictures of a Baudelaire or a Nietzsche. Something of this uncomfortable ambivalence now attaches to Victor Hugo, especially in an age which likes to seek out feet of clay and nasty motives for good deeds.

Already, over 60 years ago, the humbly-born Christian socialist writer, Charles Péguy, in an article on Hugo and Napoleon, was complaining about "*la gloire humanitaire*", taking Hugo to task because, with a certain kind of "pacifist hypocrisy", the poet urged world peace while exalting the victor of Marengo and the soldierly virtues.[8] (Péguy could have added that Hugo saw to it that his two sons eluded military service.) Olympio the great pacifist would also become an apologist for revolutionary violence. Hugo's often moving compassionate humanitarianism complicates the issue. The mystery remains: how, and why, does the defender of noble individual causes, with his stress on the value of personal life, turn into the man who hastens impatiently to justify cruelty and barbarism in the name of some remote and improbable utopian civilisation?

Still, to Victor Hugo goes the honour of being the first major French writer consistently to put his great fame to good use in humanitarian causes, the poet whose signature would be invited wherever a protest against injustice was to be made. Voltaire employed his influence to right the wrong done to Calas, and Emile Zola would battle for Captain Dreyfus; but Hugo, from the moment he campaigned for the abolition of the death penalty with *Le Dernier Jour d'un condamné* in 1829, proved tireless. He intervened successfully ten years later to save the life of the revolutionary conspirator, Armand Barbès; tried to prevent the hanging of

[5] Charles Baudelaire, "Anniversaire de la naissance de Shakespeare", *Oeuvres complètes*, pp. 797-98.
[6] André Gide, *Journal* (1951), vol. I, p. 210; also pp. 246, 995.
[7] Marcel Proust, *A la Recherche du temps perdu* (ed. Clarac and Ferré, 1954), vol. 2, p. 549.
[8] Charles Péguy, *Morceaux Choisis: Poésie et Prose* (1943), p. 119.

PRODUCED 2005 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

the American anti-slavery abolitionist, John Brown; asked Juárez in vain to spare the luckless Emperor Maximilian. He spoke up for Fenians, Negroes, Jews persecuted in Russia. Righting the wrongs done to abandoned children and to women (*"Oh! n'insultez jamais une femme qui tombe!"*) also figured high on his humanitarian agenda. When Russia sought to suppress the Polish revolt of 1863, Alexander Herzen knew to which French author he should turn for assistance. In response to Herzen's call, Hugo wrote an appeal to the Russian Army, urging the Russians not to fight the Poles. Such instances could be multiplied many times in his long life.

It is scarcely surprising that Hugo found distinguished admirers in Russia, where his views on the utility of art awoke an answering chord among writers for whom the Baudelairean cult of "art for art's sake" seemed an aberration. For Tolstoy, "the best works of our time transmit religious feelings urging towards the union and brotherhood of man (such are the works of Dickens, Hugo, Dostoevsky). . . ." Tolstoy admired *Les Misérables* no less than Dostoevsky, who considered scenes in that novel to be among the finest in world literature: "It cuts to the heart once, and the wound remains forever", Dostoevsky confessed.[9]

THE AUTHOR OF *The Humiliated and Injured* was also deeply moved by Hugo's characters, especially Jean Valjean, Fantine, Gavroche (characters in whom Baudelaire had seen only living abstractions, ideal figures, each representing "one of the chief types necessary for the development of his thesis"). Naturally, Dostoevsky felt drawn to the supreme value that Hugo placed on life, on "seeing the sun" in *Le Dernier Jour d'un condamné*, words which he quoted in a letter immediately after the sick Czarist farce of his mock execution. It was when writing of *Notre-Dame de Paris* that Dostoevsky declared the basic idea of all 19th-century art to be "*the restoration of destroyed man*, who is crushed by the unjust yoke of circumstances, by the stagnation of centuries and of social prejudices; the *justification of the humiliated and all the outcast pariahs of society* [Dostoevsky's emphasis].[10]

This element of social reform remains very strong in one aspect of modern writing, despite esteem for the work and the perfectionist attitude of the high priests of art as an absolute, from Baudelaire to Henry James, and including Flaubert. The author of *L'Education sentimentale* knew and admired Hugo immensely, calling him "a great man and a very great man", and he once suggested that he would rather be Victor Hugo than anyone else.[11] Yet Flaubert could hardly approve of Hugo's tendency to use the novel as a kind of general repository , a place for working out his opinions on society and history—or rather his own private obsessions.

IT IS, CLEARLY, BECAUSE OF Hugo's generous commitment that Jean-Paul Sartre proved comparatively indulgent towards him. While occasionally sardonic in tone, Sartre largely spared Hugo the bitter and savage irony with which he lashed, through Baudelaire and especially Flaubert, his own youthful "bourgeois" self as a believer in art as an absolute. Like so many others before him, Sartre had been moved by Hugo's poetry as a boy (he had wept over Eviradnus as well as over Jean Valjean).

For Sartre, Hugo might be irredeemably bourgeois and "the favourite interviewer of God", but he was also "the indisputable sovereign of the age", this "astonishing man . . . this giant of literature", and notably one who "possesses some superhuman power".[12] Whatever the ambiguities of Hugo's attitude to "The People" (about which more will have to be said), Sartre, yearning in vain for a proletarian readership, could not help being impressed by the way Hugo found readers among the toiling masses. (Mme Hugo, for instance, wrote to tell her husband that Parisian workers were clubbing together to buy *Les Misérables* when the novel first appeared.) Indeed, Hugo never ceased to be read by the less privileged in France during the long period of disfavour decreed by the higher artistic snobbery. Ham actor or not—and Sartre as the analyst of *mauvaise foi* was quite as well aware of this element in Olympio as Nietzsche was—Hugo, unlike Flaubert, publicly defied Napoleon III; suffered inwardly about some of his political actions; and chose to be buried in a pauper's coffin. All this could scarcely leave Sartre unmoved.

One of the glories of *Les Misérables*, according to Baudelaire (but did he really mean it?) was the struggle within Jean Valjean's conscience—"this argument of a man against himself". That slow and thus convincing development of a conscience—entirely removed from the recent and popular London musical version of the novel, and so making nonsense of it—that inner debate and conflict characterise Hugo's own development through the years. Nowhere did the poet symbolise this more implacably and memorably than in "the eye" which Cain cannot escape wherever he may hide himself. In the first years of his exile, Hugo spoke of the slow rise from error to truth, the struggle "which somehow makes of a man's life and the development of a conscience the symbol in little of human progress. . . ."[13] Hugo's slow march from ultra-Royalism to republican socialism through all the political stops in between, may be attributed by the cynical to little more than expediency. It is none the less a development that arises from a continuing debate with himself and with the dilemmas posed by his own extraordinary background and early experiences.

---

[9] Leo Tolstoy, *What is Art?* (tr. Maude, 1929), p. 265. Leonid Grossman, *Dostoevsky* (tr. Mackler, 1974), p. 495.

[10] Charles Baudelaire, essay on *Les Misérables*, *Oeuvres complètes*, p. 789. Grossman, *Dostoevsky*, p. 211; see also Konstantin Mochulsky, *Dostoevsky* (tr. Minihan, 1971), p. 142.

[11] Gustave Flaubert, Letter to Louise Colet, 2 January 1854, *Correspondance* (ed. Bruneau, 1980), p. 497. See also *Pages from the Goncourt Journal* (tr. and ed. Baldick, 1978), p. 81.

[12] Jean-Paul Sartre, *L'Idiot de la famille* (1972), vol. I, p. 841; vol. 3, pp. 91, 162-63, 382-83, 457; see also *Les Mots* (1964), pp. 15-16, 50, 145; and Victor Brombert, "Sartre, Hugo, a Grandfather", *Yale French Studies* (No. 68, 1985).

[13] Charles Baudelaire, essay on *Les Misérables*, *Oeuvres complètes*, p. 791. Victor Hugo, *Préface* of 1853, *Odes et Ballades*.

PRODUCED 2005 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Brothers & Others

"Ma vie est la vôtre, votre vie est la mienne . . . quand je vous parle de moi, je vous parle de vous."
Les Contemplations

THE FIRST OF many myths that Hugo created or promoted was himself. He was not "born an aristocrat and royalist" in 1802, as he liked to say in later years when accounting for his political moves. His father, a self-made soldier of humble origin, elevated under Bonaparte to the rank of general, was utterly ruthless in pursuit of the rebels in the Vendée, and of the *guerrilleros* who defied French occupying forces in Spain. Hugo transformed him into a neglected Napoleonic hero. His mother, whom he portrayed as a Catholic royalist, active in the anti-revolutionary rebellion in the Vendeé, was in reality a complete Voltairean, a sceptic whose family connections lay with the appalling Carrier, organiser of revolutionary atrocities, rather than with Breton royalists.

Hugo's parents, long separated, ultimately parted company. In 1812, through her lover, General Lahorie, Hugo's mother became deeply involved in the unsuccessful conspiracy of General Malet against Napoleon, a conspiracy that united Royalists and Republicans. She kept Lahorie hidden—model of the outcasts and victims in Hugo's pantheon—but she could not protect him from being betrayed and shot. The execution of Lahorie—along with the savage punishments that Hugo had witnessed as a boy during the French Occupation of Spain—made the poet into a lifelong opponent of capital punishment.

His family origins thus embraced many of the immensely complex and conflicting strains caused by the violent upheavals in France during the Revolutionary and post-Revolutionary period, and he liked to see himself as the embodiment of these contradictory elements: "*Je suis fils de ce siècle* (I am a child of this era)." Here, surely, is one source for that passion for antithesis which he indulged, as it must seem to many, in and out of season. For him, contrast and opposition lay deep within the nature of things—and only "the superficial call it antithesis", he was to say in *Les Misérables*.

Hence his debates between "yes" and "no", his puzzling over "pro" and "contra", his careful and elaborate definitions of words as if to assure himself of each contrary position, its truth or falsity. Hence the disconcerting way he can switch suddenly from a hostile position towards an institution (like the convent in *Les Misérables*) to one which explains, excuses, and even in the end appears favourable. "Right on both sides, wrong on both sides", he was to say in old age.[14] With Hugo, this was a way of trying to cover his inner conflicts and uncertainties. It was not, however, one he would follow when he was sure of his own feelings, as when he flayed the man whom he christened "*Napoléon le Petit*", to distinguish that adventurer's inferiority to the great Napoleon served by his father.

Hugo's mother welcomed Bonaparte's downfall at Waterloo and the Bourbon Restoration, and she exerted a deep influence on the poet's early youth while his father was absent. Besides, during the Restoration, if a young man as ambitious as Hugo wished to be "Chateaubriand or nothing", there was not much sense in proclaiming himself anything other than a monarchist. The impecunious young Hugo, desperate to marry his beloved, Adèle Foucher, found that the principal way to earn a living from his poems was through lauding the Bourbons. So it was that in the first preface to his book of *Odes* in 1822 he insisted on a political as well as a poetical aim, declaring that poetry required "monarchical ideas and religious beliefs". An ancient society, still shaky from "the saturnalia of atheism and anarchy" (that is, the French Revolution of 1789 and all that ensued), needed religious language (so he declared at the age of 20). The well-kept secret was that his Voltairean mother had not had him baptised; and he was never to correct the omission.

HUGO'S DETACHMENT from ultra-Royalism was ascribed by his contemporaries to his false friend, Sainte-Beuve, who became his wife's lover, and who indeed congratulated himself on his role in the poet's conversion to liberalism. In fact, this conversion was a slow process, accelerated by the banning of his historical drama, *Marion de Lorme*, in 1829—Charles X and his censors having strongly objected to the portrayal of Louis XIII in that play. Offered an increase in pension, Hugo declined, and made public his refusal to be bought. Doubtless it was without too much real sorrow that in 1830 he loudly grieved over "the dead race" of Bourbons which the tide of exile swept in and then swept out again.

The censors had objected also to *Hernani* because "The King often speaks like a bandit, while the bandit treats the King like a brigand." Eventually, the play was passed for performance but only so that the public might see just how extravagant was a mind "freed from every rule and all sense of decorum".[15] Years later, Théophile Gautier insisted that he wore a pink doublet, not a red one, to the battleground of the famous first night in February 1830, for which Hugo prearranged surely the most illustrious claque ever assembled (Stendhal, Balzac, Berlioz, *et al.*). By the paler colour, the mature Théophile Gautier wished to convey that the battle had not been in the least political. This was to overlook the role of Hernani, the doomed heroic brigand, whom a recent French critic has even fashionably called "a terrorist", and the fact that the King, Don Carlos, is shown (to the contemporary audience's delight or outrage) to behave like an ordinary human being.

Hostility to the political implications of Hugo's dramas was still being forcibly expressed at the time of *Ruy Blas* (1838), which portrays a Queen in love with a lackey:

> "Let M. Hugo make no mistake about it, his plays arouse opposition more for his political than his literary system:

[14] Victor Hugo, *Choses vues* (ed. Juin, 1972), vol. 4, p. 266.
[15] See Hubert Juin, *Victor Hugo* (1980), vol. I, p. 574.

PRODUCED 2005 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

people resent less his scorn for Aristotle than his insults to Royalty. . . ."[16]

Objection to his dramas on political grounds appears barely comprehensible today.

THE BATTLE OF *Hernani* preceded the July Revolution by several months but remained inextricably associated with it; it was a link later forged by Hugo himself in a celebrated poem (he foxily backdated it from 1854 to 1834). During the early years of the Orléanist régime, Hugo kept his distance. The poet must know how to remain above the battle, austere, benevolent, impartial, however difficult this may be. He must "belong to all parties by their magnanimous side, and to none by their bad side"[17]—a tall order indeed. Hugo allowed that great things have been accomplished by writers directly involved in political affairs (a clear allusion to Chateaubriand). But in his view the poet should stay uncommitted, free above all in his social concern for downtrodden workers and the suffering poor, seen as subject to envy and object of charity. This concern for the underprivileged was growing ever stronger during his period of political detachment.

With his election to the Académie Française in 1841, however, Hugo offered his services. He had already been taken up by Princess Hélène, Louis-Philippe's charming daughter-in-law; and the King now liked to unburden himself to Olympio in private. A cherished favourite, elevated to the peerage ("*Le Roi s'amuse*", said the wits), Hugo was left in a somewhat difficult position when Louis-Philippe was forced to make a hasty departure in February 1848. The poet declined to join the Provisional Government when invited to do so by his colleague, Lamartine, having openly supported a Regency rather than a Republic. Unsuccessful in the elections of March 1848, he was returned to the Constituent Assembly in the fateful June of that year.

Then there occurred the incident that left him with a bad conscience and ultimately affected the solitary course he was to take in later life.

He was one of the 60 special commissioners appointed by the Constituent Assembly to re-establish order during the June insurrection. He bravely defied danger under fire, encouraging a detachment of the national guard to take possession of a section of the barricades. He had done his duty as he saw it then, and afterwards tried to obtain an amnesty for the defeated insurgents—but his role in the whole affair continued to haunt him, and would dispose him to alter his attitude to the theme of Revolution.

Truth in History?

". . . l'aspect historique et l'aspect légendaire. . . . Le second n'est pas moins vrai que le premier. . . ."
La Légende des siècles

HUGO'S MIGHTIEST contribution to politics lies less in his own political record than in the realm of the mythology he stimulated with his seductive word. Few can have done as much to promote a number of potent myths that are still current. For the comparatively rare intellectuals who might have studied Michelet on the subject of *Le Peuple*, countless children have learned Hugo's poem "Les Pauvres Gens", on the virtuous poor, while common readers have responded to the irruption of the lower orders in *Notre-Dame de Paris* and to the pitiful figure of the doomed grotesque monster, Quasimodo. Indeed, with the advent of cinema, Hugo's creation now embodies the myth of the tormented outcast even for those who have not read the novel, thus suggesting the immense emotional drive of the writer's imagery.

The myth of the People, in Hugo as in Michelet, springs—rather like Athena from the head of Zeus—from the Revolution of 1789. As Hugo was to convey in his novel, *Quatrevingt-treize*, "Revolution spells the advent of peoples, and basically, the People is Man". Yet while admitting that "*le peuple est bon*", Hugo stumbled against a problem. Why did men of the people sometimes behave badly and shed blood? That was because the People had to be distinguished from the crowd (*la foule*)—"mediocre minds, that is to say, the crowd", according to a variant reading of *Les Misères* (the earlier pre-1848 version of *Les Misérables*). As Hugo noted in his diary (24 February 1848), "the crowd . . . is not the people. . . ."[18] Seven years before, in his address on election to the Académie Française, he had outlined his political programme, which included scorn for the populace and love for the People. When his use of these terms was queried by a working-class editor, Hugo hastened to justify himself by declaring that by "the People" he meant those in all social strata who worked for justice and truth, whereas by "*la populace*" he meant those who choose stagnation, remain ignorant through laziness, and commit evil knowingly.

Hugo scarcely seems to have departed from this Manichean view of the underprivileged. In *Les Misérables*, the true members of the People, like Jean Valjean, who are endowed

---

[16] *La Quotidienne*, 22 November 1838, in Juin, *Victor Hugo*, vol. I, p. 793.

[17] *Préface, Les Voix intérieures* (1837); also *Préface, Les Rayons et les ombres* (1840).

[18] *Choses vues*, vol. 2, p. 287; *Les Misérables* (ed. Allem, 1951), p. 1,490, note 7.

PRODUCED 2005 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

with human dignity, who suffer martyrdom and are capable of redemption, are contrasted with *la canaille*, the denizens of the lower depths, the criminal underworld (like Thénardier and his gang). The very title of the novel is ambiguous, since the word *misérable* can mean either poor, wretched, and pitiable, or vile and despicable. Hugo offers two humane remedies: (*1*) the liberal panacea, Education; and (*2*) a more radical and utopian aim, the Abolition of Poverty. There is, however, a telling moment in *Les Misérables* when Hugo speaks of half-naked masses demanding work and bread for all by violence:

> "Yes, they were savages, but savages of civilisation."

And he went on to state that, if forced to make a choice between oppressors and oppressed he "would choose the barbarians". This expression may strike an unfortunate note, in view of the fact that the catastrophic rise in barbarism in the 20th century has belied Hugo's hopeful vision of Progress, to which he alluded *ad nauseam*. When he wrote that novel he could still sometimes believe that there was another choice: namely, enlightenment, reform, "progress by gentle means", for that is "the policy of God".[19]

CLOSELY ASSOCIATED WITH the myth of "the People" was the myth of Napoleon, the popular dictator, in the propagation of whose cult Hugo played a vital role. Inevitably, in the early Royalist poems, Buonaparte had appeared as a living scourge, a despot, a false god. Then, as the poet came to appreciate his own father, the Napoleonic general, and his father's values, the figure of Napoleon began to obsess Olympio with its unique grandeur ("*Toujours lui! Lui partout!*"). This conversion and obsession were given to the youthful Marius in *Les Misérables*, of whom it is said that he went too far in his admiration for the great man. Hugo himself favoured the return of Napoleon's ashes from Saint Helena to the Invalides; present at the ceremony, he noted how the people rejoiced while he had to tell prudent members of the bourgeoisie seated on the platform, "*Chapeau bas!* (Hats off!)" as the cortège passed by.

For Hugo, Napoleon spelt not only heroic deeds but, even more significantly, the hour of French greatness. The cult of Napoleon became inextricable from Hugo's nationalism. Europe should be united under the banner of French civilisation (as it was under Napoleon's conquering armies). The battle of Waterloo, whose "*morne plaine*" he visited, was a defeat largely inflicted by chance, as in a lottery. So Hugo could later congratulate himself on having "re-won" that battle through his chapters on the subject in *Les Misérables*.

It is no small irony, then, that the poet helped to create the climate for the triumph of the Emperor's nephew, Prince Louis Napoleon. Indeed, Hugo favoured that adventurer's candidacy for the Presidency in 1849. Only gradually did it dawn on Olympio that Louis Napoleon said one thing to him and something else to others. The *coup d'état* of 2 December 1851 confirmed Hugo's growing misgivings. He was deeply shocked by the sight of civilian casualties, now etched on the national memory by his poem "Souvenir de la nuit du 4" (on the death of a seven-year-old boy mourned by his humble grandmother).

As a *député*, Hugo joined with like-minded colleagues in an attempt to save the Republic by persuading the people to rise and the soldiers to desert. Nobody stirred. Where was the People, that dark sleeper? Hugo went into hiding: the word was out that if he were discovered he was to be shot. With the aid of the former actress, his long-suffering mistress, Juliette Drouet, he escaped to Brussels, and thence to Jersey and later Guernsey. From his island exile, he excoriated *Napoléon le Petit* and his adherents on the make. Hugo declined to take advantage of the general amnesty of 1859, thundering memorably that if only one exile remained it would be he. ("*Et s'il n'en reste qu'un, je serai celui-là.*")

Commenting on Victor Hugo's protest against the *coup d'état* in his pamphlet *Napoléon le Petit*, Karl Marx observed that the poet confined himself to bitter and witty invective. "The event appears in his work like a bolt from the blue", wrote Marx in the Preface to the second edition of *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte*:

> "He sees in it only the violent act of a single individual. He does not notice that he makes this individual great instead of little by ascribing to him a personal power of initiative such as would be without parallel in world history. I, on the contrary, demonstrate how the class struggle in France created circumstances and relationships that made it possible for a grotesque mediocrity to play a hero's part."

Indeed, despite his passion for history and his fondness for accumulating minute historical detail (not always strictly accurate), Olympio did not perceive class or economic factors as dominating motives in the affairs of men. For him, the purely human, the role of the individual conscience, its place in the divine scheme, take precedence. For him, history is heard at the gates of legend—that is, the mythic is ever present. Small wonder that *Les Misérables* and its reflections on history would prove rather more accessible to the general public than the writings of Marx.

IT WAS THROUGH his long opposition to Napoleon III that Hugo came to embody the myth of the very Republic that he had not sought in 1848. Reflecting after the event, he believed that formerly he had seen the Republic simply as one political form among many—as the most perfect and logical government, but one for which his countrymen were not ready. However, once the Second Republic was founded on the basis of popular sovereignty in 1848, once it had decreed the abolition of capital punishment and slavery, it became "a principle", and resistance to it was unthinkable. After the repression that followed the June Days, Hugo slowly moved from being a vaguely liberal conservative towards voting with the Left, disgusted as he was by the loathsome policy of *vae victis*, by press censorship, blinkered clericalism, and by the taunts of reactionaries who shouted "Blasphemy!" when he talked of "destroying poverty". Once he saw the Republic

[19] *Les Misérables*, pp. 870-71.

PRODUCED 2005 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

spurned and downtrodden, he cried: "Republicans, open your ranks! I am with you", revealing that tenderness for the defeated which was so characteristic of him.[20]

So it was as the incarnation of the Republic that he returned to France in 1870 on the downfall of Napoleon III, though troubled by thoughts of saving the country as a reluctant dictator. After his nineteen-year exile, he was greeted with a popular patriotic enthusiasm which could be compared with that enjoyed by General de Gaulle at the Liberation. However much of a nuisance he may later have proved as a *député* to republican politicians, he remained the figurehead of the Third Republic, his birthday honoured each year with popular rejoicing, the boulevard where he lived being named after him during his lifetime. The extraordinary scenes of official and general mourning at his funeral procession from the Arc de Triomphe to the Panthéon in May 1885, memorably described by the nationalist writer Maurice Barrès in *Les Déracinés*, served in that novel to consecrate Hugo not only as the great national poet but as the hero of the French nation and a source of spiritual regeneration.

This role he has fulfilled down to the present day. A headline in *Le Monde* for the approaching centenary of his death in 1985 called him the "*poète national*". As such, different political groups want him for their own. Socialists, for instance, remember how Hugo could say (without apparently batting an eyelid) "old socialist that I am . . ." (1854); or "My socialism dates from 1828" (1869). A socialist president of the National Assembly recently ventured to declare that Victor Hugo "is and will remain part of the Left". At the same time, with equal justice, the Gaullist leader, Jacques Chirac, reflected:

> "He could have been a Gaullist. The greatness of France, the consciousness of the special genius of the French, the cult of freedom—these Gaullist values could not be foreign to Victor Hugo."

Given the wide range of the poet's political positions during his lifetime, he could indeed sincerely if selectively be claimed by almost all as a genuine part of their mythic patrimony.

Opening & Closing Doors

> *"La révolution française, qui n'est pas autre chose que l'idéal armé du glaive, se dressa, et du même mouvement brusque, ferma la porte du mal et ouvrit la porte du bien."*
>
> **Les Misérables**

The Third Republic led Hugo back to the Revolution and the First Republic. The days when the Revolution of 1789 meant to him "the saturnalia of atheism and anarchy" were long past: now it had become part of the national mythology. Already, before he was 30, Revolution appeared as a chaos "necessary" for creating a world. From being necessary, it passed to being an instrument of Fate and of Providence, and thus could not be defeated. Its direction and meaning were highly moral. More devoutly, it created man a second time. The French Revolution laid down conditions for the whole world (as he declared in a passage deleted from the final text of *Les Misérables*).

An essential part of this semi-mystical and messianic concept of the French Revolution and its continuing influence—through which liberty "sheds its rays" from France—is Paris. Hugo loved the capital, carefully recording for posterity the lineaments of its streets as he remembered them in exile after they had been torn down by Baron Haussmann. The poet used to wander through its old *quartiers* and the as yet open spaces of the suburbs. At the first sign of any disturbance, Hugo would be out to see what was happening. For him, after the July Revolution, the city of Paris is the crater of the great central revolution (1831). It saves civilisation, that is "almost to say it saves mankind" (1848). Paris, site of the revolutionary revelation, is the human Jerusalem (1867).

No wonder, then, that the very air of Paris is unique and can preserve the innocence of the Parisian urchin Gavroche and his like. Despite the poverty and corruption through which Gavroche moves, Paris transforms him into a poetic figure whose charm many find difficult to resist, and whose death at the barricades has often caused a tear to be shed. The figure of Gavroche was inspired by the pistol-waving youth who moves beside bare-breasted *Liberté* in Delacroix's great painting of the 1830 barricades. Such boys, according to one unfriendly witness (Chateaubriand), were already causing the death of their betters in July 1830. Through Gavroche (who does not kill anyone) Hugo united both the artistic and the historical current, to impose one of the most powerful figures of revolutionary mythology. Curiously, his portrayal was at once an enlargement of a real model and a poetic creation which in turn influenced real-life imitators. Hugo did not heed the warning of his one-time master, Chateaubriand, against encouraging the emulation of such dangerous armed children.

---

[20] *Choses vues*, vol. 3, p. 210.

PRODUCED 2005 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

It would be mistaken, however, to imagine that Hugo did not hesitate for a very long time before propagating the Myth of the Revolutionary Idea. Revolution was a theme on which he reflected deeply throughout his life. Just as he tried to distinguish between the People and the populace, so he brooded over the difference between riot (*émeute*) and rebellion (*insurrection*). The uprising at the liberal General Lamarque's funeral in June 1832 appeared to him at the time it happened as a riot—"folly drowned in blood". It was only later that he transformed the heroism of the workers who fought and died in the Cloître Saint-Merry in 1832 into the resonant last stand of the fanatical young idealist Enjolras and his companions, one of the most stirring tributes ever penned to the heroic myth of the Barricades.

In *Les Misérables*, Hugo has a long digression on riot and rebellion. Of these pre-revolutionary upheavals, one is right, the other wrong. For, if the revolt is rejected by the majority, it remains an *émeute*; but if the uprising is accepted, Insurrection turns into Revolution. At the point where young Marius reflects on whether to join his friends at the barricades, Hugo scribbled a distasteful "*note pour moi*".

> "Here, elevate rebellion. The country groans, so be it. But humanity tells you: Go forward! It is no longer a question of a sacred territory but of a holy idea. France lies bleeding, but liberty is wreathed in smiles.
> (*Ici relever l'insurrection. La patrie se plaint, soit. Mais l'humanité vous dit: Va! il ne s'agit plus d'un territoire sacré, mais d'une idée sainte. La France saigne, mais la liberté sourit.*)"[21]

That Hugo chose a failed uprising for his heroic theme may have been due quite as much to his sympathy for those who failed as to his fluctuating feelings about Revolution at that period. Meanwhile, high-sounding antithesis covered an unhealthy readiness to accept the shedding of his fellow-countrymen's blood.

It was from at least 1848 that his attitude to the year 1793 (a date used as shorthand for the Terror and revolutionary violence) began subtly to change. Hitherto, if he had grown to accept 1789, he had rejected 1793, which bore "the mark of the wild beast". Now, in 1848, he preferred the great men of 1793 to his own contemporaries: "I would rather see Titans floundering in chaos than nincompoops bungling around." By 1851, he could remark that the permanent fear of 1793 had been instilled by monarchist writers—in short, he perceived it as a mere bogy, designed to mislead. Soon, in "Nox" in *Les Châtiments*, he was applying the argument of necessity to a personified "Titan 1793"—"You who through terror saved liberty". He would write in a poem that it is through evil that one has to move out of evil. Even regicide became "necessary", and the executioners of Louis XVI as well as the King himself were equally marked by "relative innocence".[22] Increasing impatience at the failure of Napoleon III's régime to collapse made Hugo invoke revolution. His prayer was to be answered with the blood of others.

Hugo's strangely poetic if flawed novel, *Quatrevingt-treize*, published in 1873 (two years after the bloodstained defeat of the Commune), was seen by a contemporary critic as an apology for the Communards. Yet Hugo's conduct in 1871 was far from straightforward. He had withdrawn to Brussels (and was ostensibly kept there on private business) during the upheaval, while offering his services as a mediator. After the abuses committed by the Commune and its collapse, he ventured to observe that it was "a good thing badly done".[23] But once the elderly satyr learned from an eye-witness—Marie Mercier (who became his mistress)—about the way the defeated Communards had been indiscriminately shot down by their fellow countrymen, he generously offered survivors asylum in Brussels. As a result, his home was attacked and he received notice to quit Belgium.

Hugo was the only French writer of repute to intercede for the Communards. The poems he wrote on behalf of those facing execution or deportation to New Caledonia—including the fiery publicist Henri Rochefort and the revolutionary poet Louise Michel (who sometimes used the signature "Enjolras")—often justified excesses that had been committed under the Commune. The burning of the great Louvre library, for instance, was seen as the action of one who had never been taught to read. (In fact, according to a leader of the Commune, Jules Vallès, the fires were not started by illiterates.)[24] Such crimes were, for Hugo in *L'Année terrible*, "the crimes of the dawn".

By the time he wrote *Quatrevingt-treize*, the Revolution had become in his eyes not merely a necessity, but an idea sent from heaven, marked by Destiny and God. "To attribute the revolution to men is to attribute the tide to the waves", he declared in that novel. It deals with the savage struggle in the Vendée in 1793 between a vengeful aristocratic leader, Lantenac; his opponent, the strict instrument of the Convention, Cimourdain; and Cimourdain's one-time pupil, the gentle idealist Gauvain, Lantenac's great-nephew. This struggle provides a pretext for a reflection on the nature of the Republic and on revolutionary violence. Like Marius and Enjolras before them, Cimourdain and Gauvain, deeply attached to each other, are poetic projections of "one soul that is cut in two and equally divided"—the soul of Hugo himself, now torn between the conflicting claims of revolutionary severity and clemency.

Cimourdain stands as "a spirit of the tempest" who sees pity as a kind of treason in revolutionary times. Gauvain, on the other hand, is presented as an ideal figure of the Revolution, so touched by Lantenac's one good deed that he allows his ruthless great-uncle to escape. Obliged to

---

[21] *Les Misérables*, p. 1,731, note 15.
[22] Hubert Juin, *Victor Hugo* (1985), vol. 2, p. 12. *Choses vues*, vol. 2, p. 314. *Les Misérables*, p. 850.
[23] Letter of July 1871, falsely dated April 1871, quoted by Guy Rosa, "Politique du désastre: Hugo durant 'l'année terrible'", *Europe* (No. 671, March 1985), p. 180.
[24] Annarosa Poli, "*L'Année Terrible* de Victor Hugo", in *George Sand et les années terribles* (1975), pp. 265-66.

PRODUCED 2005 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

implement a decree which made such acts of clemency punishable by death, Cimourdain debates with Gauvain on that tender-hearted young man's last night on earth. In a resonant speech, Gauvain tells him:

> "What the revolution does at this moment is mysterious. Behind the visible work there is the invisible work. One conceals the other. The visible work is fierce, the invisible work is sublime. . . . It is strange and beautiful. It was indeed necessary to make use of the materials of the past. Hence this extraordinary '93. Beneath a scaffolding of barbarism a temple of civilisation is being built."

Cimourdain the fanatic envisages the future in terms of "the republic of the absolute"; Gauvain prefers "the republic of the ideal"—a realm of devotion and sacrifice. When asked by Cimourdain if he absolves the present, that is, the Terror and his own death sentence, Gauvain replies that he does. Why?

> "Because it is a storm. A storm always knows what it is doing. As against one blasted oak-tree, numberless forests are purified! Civilisation was in the grip of plague, this gale comes to the rescue. Perhaps it is not selective enough. Can it act otherwise? It is entrusted with the arduous task of sweeping away disease! In the face of the horrible infection, I understand the fury of the blast."[25]

So the angelic visionary Gauvain goes to the guillotine, convinced of his dream of a purged future, regardless of the cost in human lives. Can he really believe that a storm "knows what it is doing"? Does Hugo himself believe it, or is he simply moved by his own mighty music? The image of the romantic revolutionary storm functions to defy reason and to justify the Terror in the name of an "invisible work", that is, a mystical process.

HUGO'S AESTHETIC could prove a supremely powerful instrument of artistic rhetoric, capable of appealing to visceral emotions and instincts in the reader in a Wagnerian manner; but it was scarcely a sound foundation for ethical or political judgment. Ultimately, Hugo's passion for sublimity and grandeur, and his direct link to the Deity's intentions, led him to choose clemency, social betterment, compassion for the underprivileged—*and* terror. He would not be the last to do so, and in this respect Jean-Paul Sartre was his most outstanding disciple.

Apparently Hugo never had the occasion for second thoughts, as Sartre once did. Sartre told Olivier Todd (without, however, uttering a word of regret or repentance) that he never imagined the horrors that would eventually take place in "liberated" Viet Nam and Cambodia—"re-education" camps, the *Khmers rouges*, the Boat People: "*On ne pouvait pas savoir que ça tournerait comme ça* (One couldn't know that that would turn out like that. . .)."[26] The blinkered proponents of an idealistic rhetoric of violence never seem to envisage that words have consequences.

[25] *Quatrevingt-treize* (1967), pp. 367-68, 371-72.
[26] Olivier Todd, *Un fils rebelle* (1981), p. 16.

Hugo in New York, or Dancing on a Writer's Grave

QUESTION: **How many people are in a mood to party after seeing a somber musical in which the hero dies, half the characters bite the dust during the Paris insurrection of 1832, and the most striking set is a sewer?**
ANSWER: **Close to a thousand. That is how many showed up at the Seventh Regiment Armory for the Opening Night party for *Les Misérables*. Never mind that Raquel Welch, Calvin Klein, Carol Channing and Mayor Koch were among the no-shows. The guests who did arrive more than filled the vast Drill Hall of the 1880 landmark building. They danced to everything from Rock to *La Vie en Rose* while, upstairs, dozens of homeless women found shelter for the night.**

JIM MCNABB, *who coordinated the $147,000 party for Cameron Mackintosh (the producer of "Les Misérables"), said he chose the Armory because the fortress-like building is "appropriate to the 'struggle-of-the-downtrodden' theme of Victor Hugo's novel".*

For the party, which was underwritten by the Mutual Benefit Companies, the rest-rooms were repainted, trees were brought into the hall, centrepieces were made of French wild flowers in wicker baskets, transparent fabric swags with tiny lights were used to create the illusion of a ceiling in the 85-foot-high hall, campaign tents housed the buffet area, and everyone got a free copy of the Signet paperback of the novel.

AS FOR THE FOOD, **"our goal was to avoid haute cuisine and place stronger emphasis on cuisine ordinaire," said Jean-Michel Savoca of New York Parties, which whipped up everything from *choucroute à l'alsacienne* to apple tarts from a Norman recipe.**

The food, Mr Savoca said, was also sent upstairs to the homeless women as well as to the shelters at the Bowery Mission and the Fifth Avenue Presbyterian Church.

NOT EVERYONE *was impressed. "I'm not going to stand in a long line waiting for food to be served" said Joanne Winship, who left at 10.30 p.m. with her husband, Frederick.*

"I mean, we're not peasants. Anyway, my housekeeper has the most delicious spareribs in the oven."

Kathleen Turner and her husband, Jay Weiss, did not stay long either, but Claus von Bülow appeared to enjoy himself immensely. He had kind words for the show, too:

"I liked it very much because I feel so much like Jean Valjean."

Ron Alexander
in THE NEW YORK TIMES

PRODUCED 2005 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

The Language of Revolution

"The Hugolian myth is international. . . ."
Letter from M. André Lazar, Budapest, in "Le Monde", 25 January 1985

WHO CAN MEASURE the influence of Victor Hugo? It resembles Wagner's in its universality. Moreover, it can be found in music and painting (Hugo himself being no mean master with pen-and-wash) as well as in literature and ideas. Yet there is one field where Hugo's influence has been strikingly assessed, and that is in the realm of myth, by a writer and political figure who was himself a mythomaniac: André Malraux. In his essay on Saint-Just (published in 1954, some five years before he became Gaullist Minister of Culture), Malraux wrote with characteristic flair and invention:

> "On the eve of the battle of Fleurus [in 1794, when the French revolutionary army was victorious] the Revolution was still a vast realm of make-believe. Against Michelet, against Victor Hugo—against the Commune above all—many historians are tempted to confuse its history with that of the interests which clashed there."

And Malraux added cryptically:

> "Some experiences have taught our age that revolutions are *also* revolutionary."

Malraux liked to see the men of the First Republic living "in accordance with their dreams, in the semi-conscious state suggested by legend", rather than being governed by their declared aims like happiness or justice. Revolutionary exaltation lives on the future and the unknown, declared the author of *L'Espoir*, in words that evoke the spirit of Enjolras and Gauvain.[27]

Even more significant in this regard is a passage in Malraux's grandiose *Antimémoires* which tells of his conversations with Pandit Nehru in terms of total recall and with mythic vibrations. "Do you know", conveniently inquires Nehru as one intellectual to another, "that *Les Misérables* is one of the most famous foreign books in India?" This query prompts Malraux to pen a highflown passage that serves as an elaboration upon his earlier remarks in the essay on Saint-Just:

> "I had already encountered, and would do so again many times later on, this presence of France. Soviet Russia has not erased it. In underprivileged countries, the machine brings forth qualified workers rather than a worker proletariat. And wherever revolution is not called for by the proletariat but by the people, the lesson of the French Revolution, the exaltation of the fight for justice proclaimed from Saint-Just to Jaurès, by way of Michelet and above all by way of Victor Hugo, preserves a prestige at least equal to that of Marxism. In Africa, in Latin America, even where the technique of revolution is Russian, its language is still French. I had seen copies of *Les Misérables* between Bakunin and the theoretical works of Tolstoy, on the Ramblas in Barcelona during the Civil War. . . ."[28]

Even allowing a good deal for French nationalist sentiment, the place allotted here to Hugo is immense. *Les Misérables* has remained required reading for revolutionaries and would-be revolutionaries. Hugo's "ideas" may be mediocre, as the literati sometimes observe, but such notions are long-lived.

Fascinated by violence, Malraux, the one-time fellow-traveller and leading mythomaniac of our day, saw in the great myth-maker Victor Hugo "above all", and in *Les Misérables*, a source of revolutionary mythology and inspiration as vital as that of Marxism. The advocates of romantic revolution and those of the "scientific" variety hurry impatiently towards one grim altar. They are adherents of the pagan religion of the unknown future, a cult no less odious than any other bigotry, and one which seemingly requires endless hecatombs of ill-fated peasants and killing fields of innocent victims. Not only personal devotion and self-immolation but also unspeakable sacrifices are demanded by a false god in the name of that heartfelt and generous compassion which it is so hard to gainsay.

All the same, whenever compassion goes along with the over-ready acceptance of revolutionary blood-letting—as it does in the later writings of Hugo, at no risk to himself—it should be seen for the cant it is. As Albert Camus once remarked:

> "I only declare that all legitimisation of violence must be rejected. . . . I abhor comfortable violence. I abhor those whose words go further than their deeds. It is here that I part company from some of our great spirits. . . ."[29]

But then, unlike Sartre, Camus was no disciple of Victor Hugo.

---

[27] André Malraux, "Saint-Just et la force des choses", in *Le Triangle noir* (1970), pp. 129-30.

[28] André Malraux, *Antimémoires* (1967), p. 169.

[29] Albert Camus, "Première réponse à Emmanuel d'Astier de la Vigerie", *Actuelles* I, *Essais* (ed. Quilliot & Faucon, 1965), pp. 355-56.

PRODUCED 2005 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

NOTES & TOPICS

The Hunting of the Snark

The Socialist "Boojum"—By MAX BELOFF

But oh, beamish nephew, beware of the day.
If your Snark be a Boojum! For then
You will softly and suddenly vanish away,
And never be met with again!

LEWIS CARROLL

TIME WAS when a special number of the *New Statesman* entitled "DOES SOCIALISM HAVE A FUTURE?"[1] would have been an important event both in the world of thought and in relation to practice. No one would have imagined the answer to be in the negative, but one would have expected light to be thrown upon the problems of the inevitable transition to socialism with the radiance of distinguished minds.

The history of the *New Stateman*'s first half-century[2] indicates the range of the journal's influence and the extent to which it was in tune with many of the dominant trends of political and social thought of the time. Its first number (in 1913) included contributions on the political side by J. L. Hammond, J. M. Keynes, Harold Laski, Bertrand Russell, Graham Wallas, and Leonard Woolf, with an equal balance where letters and the arts were concerned: Laurence Binyon, Edmund Blunden, Desmond McCarthy, Raymond Mortimer, V. S. Pritchett, Ethel Smyth, Lytton Strachey, and Virginia Woolf.[3] One can imagine the galaxy of learning and talent that Kingsley Martin could have recruited had he chosen to create a special number of this kind in the heady early years of the Attlee government: Laski, Cole, Tawney. They were men with whom one might disagree but whom no one of whatever political complexion could treat other than seriously. Yet the first impression made by this special number is the lack of intellectual distinction of nearly all the contributors: not scholars of international renown but the *lumpenprofessoriat* and the everyday banalities of current Left-wing journalism.

For this deficiency it would be unfair to blame the *New Statesman* itself. Its course has been a downward one in recent years, when it seemingly abandoned the high seriousness of the Kingsley Martin tradition and opted for "investigative journalism", that ultimate pretence that indulgence in mischievous gossip and circumstantial detail is somehow a contribution for the public good. Under its new editor, John Lloyd, it has taken a turn upward again. One must assume that Mr Lloyd got together the best team he could, and that its weaknesses reflect the rather simple fact that socialism as a creed no longer commands the allegiance of men and women of intellectual distinction. Why should it? How could it?

Indeed, the impression these essays make is that their authors are reconciled to the fact that to reiterate the claim that socialism in the strict sense—as it would have been defined in their different ways by the sages of an earlier generation: the public ownership of the means of production, distribution and exchange, or production for use, not profit—has become unacceptable except to the very young or the very naive, into which categories *New Statesman* readers rarely fall. So what the contributors have had to do is to redefine socialism in such a way as to make it appear that the changes in society they would now seek are those that do have an appeal, and are at the same time part of a continuing tradition so that the socialist label can still be claimed and proudly worn. It is not surprising that the task has been too much for the slender resources at Mr Lloyd's disposal.

It is disappointing to find that the one contributor who has, and deservedly, a reputation for scholarship—Britain's only first-rate Marxist historian, Professor Eric Hobsbawm—has so little in the way of new thinking to offer, since he is compelled to reiterate the belief that "the public interest is better represented by public bodies of men and women who do not work for profit, rather than private individuals or entities trying to make money. . . ." This from an economic and social historian who has done so much to illumine the defects of capitalism by concrete example and analysis. The fact that Professor Hobsbawm can only proceed in generalities without showing the evidence for his beliefs in any country or period in which socialism has actually been tried is a sad one. But at least he sticks to his creed and does not try to pretend (unlike Mr Roy Hattersley, whose essay if one were kind would be passed over in silence) that socialism can be redefined in ways which make nonsense of its distinctiveness. As Professor

[1] "Does Socialism Have a Future?", *New Statesman* special issue, 6 March 1987.

[2] Edward Hyams, *The New Statesman—History of the First Fifty Years* (1963).

[3] See C. H. Rolph, *Kingsley: The Life, Letters and Diaries of Kingsley Martin* (1973), pp. 160-61.

PRODUCED 2005 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Hobsbawm points out, to try to add the notion of freedom to the criteria which socialism should meet is all very well—"but if we write common ownership out of it, what is the point of calling oneself socialist? . . ."

IF SOCIALISTS ARE TO rethink their beliefs, then (as any Marxist could tell them) they must understand and deal seriously with their opponents. The only attempt to do this in the *New Statesman* special number is made by one Sarah Benton, in an article entitled "The Hardening on the Right". Unfortunately, instead of what one might expect—a critical and informed analysis of the output of bodies like the Centre for Policy Studies or the Institute of Economic Affairs, or of such influences upon the counter-revolution in ideas as F. A. Hayek, Maurice Cranston, Leonard Schapiro, and others—what we get is an extraordinary farrago of misinformation and misunderstanding, based upon the quite ludicrous proposition that the rejection of socialism by so many serious and responsible people is somehow the result of a Right-wing plot owing nothing to serious research and everything to American ideological inspiration and financial support. The writer's distance from reality is shown, for instance, in her inclusion among Right-wing American-backed bodies of the University of Buckingham, whose original endowment was the gift of an eminent Liberal peer.

The difficulty for the exponents of this conspiratorial view of recent intellectual history is that (as other contributors to this special number reveal) "the language of markets" has now penetrated the socialist consciousness to such an extent that it is necessary to try to demonstrate how the advantages of resource allocation through market mechanisms can be reconciled with a socialist commitment to egalitarianism and, in particular, to the equality of outcomes which has displaced in socialist minds their earlier commitment to equality of opportunity. Of course it can be done, if one is prepared like Professor Raymond Plant to stretch the use of language to its limits by redefining "liberty" and "coercion" and "the State". It also involves much play with the current hurrah-word, "community". In any event, it is comforting to know that this particular philosopher has no patience with "the withering away of the State".

The confusion that exists is due to an attempt to translate the new freedom-oriented socialism into a doctrine that will enable a new version of class politics to be pursued now that the changed industrial situation has made the old-fashioned commitment of British trade-unionism to old-style class war increasingly irrelevant. I suppose one has to go to a collaboration between two teachers of sociology to get a nostrum as question-begging as the following:

> ". . . a recognition by the new class politics of the important existence of plural social movements and the promotion of a left political culture which would aggregate the interests of both working-class and social movements on the basis of shared values, among which notions of radical, decentralised, and anti-hierarchical autonomy would play a substantial mobilising role."

Please, Mrs Worthington, don't send your daughter to read sociology at Lancaster—nor your son either, for that matter.

"When", writes Harriet Gilbert, "socialists write or talk about art, you can usually detect, if you listen very carefully, a nervous evasive kind of shuffling at the centre of their thoughts. . . ." In the case of her article, even careful listening is not essential.

AN INTERESTING EXAMPLE of the way in which the foundations of socialist thinking in this country have been eroded is the explanation by Mrs Frances Morrell of why the Tony Benn anti-European strategy with which she was associated will no longer meet the country's needs—still less the even fiercer economic isolationism of the "Campaign Group" and their in-house intellectual Mr Andrew Glyn. Instead we are to have "joint strategies with other European countries who share the same objectives and face the same problems". While it is true that other European countries face many of the same problems, they do not for the most part share the same objectives, since even their socialists (in some cases even their Communists) do not feel the need to kowtow before the dethroned idols of socialism.

"The conditions of a stable currency expansion without an imports crisis and the reassertion of control by elected government over international trade and finance await a joint initiative in the interest of the working people of Europe." Phrased like that, the wait will be a long one. Mrs Morrell is described in a footnote as leader of the Inner London Education Authority, as she was indeed when the article was published. Alas, no more. She has since become the latest victim of the *dolchstoss*—the cogent symbol of socialist fraternity in the metropolis.

HOW, THEN, are we to explain the ability of the *New Statesman* team to give a positive answer to the question of whether socialism has a future? The answer is not to be found in the special number, but on its back cover. Headed "SPRING IN THE USSR", this turns out to be an advertisement by "Progressive Tours Ltd" for visits of an improving kind to the Soviet Union, Hungary, and Czechoslovakia. What a wonderful whiff of the 1930s and the Webbs and Bernard Shaw!—faith, still, in the great socialist paradise over the hill.

Some confirmation of this explanation is presented by Dr John Campbell in his thoughtful and thorough political biography of Aneurin Bevan.[4] It is clear that one element in Bevan's commitment to fundamentalist Marxism was his belief that the superior efficiency of "socialism" as compared to "capitalism" would be provided by the Soviet Union. His simultaneous and equally sincere commitment to the values of liberal democracy made it impossible for him either to become a Communist himself, as did others from his South Wales miners' background, or to overlook the repressive

[4] *Nye Bevan and the Mirage of British Socialism*. By JOHN CAMPBELL. Weidenfeld & Nicolson, £15.95.

PRODUCED 2005 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

crudities of the Soviet system. Yet he remained convinced that industrialism itself would make the maintenance of a totalitarian political order impossible, and clutched eagerly at any signs of a relaxation of the Soviet tyranny. His reaction to Khrushchev's post-Stalinist mood has every similarity to the current attitude of British socialists to Gorbachov's *glasnost*. On the other hand, the evidence that the Soviet system was *not* "outstripping the West" in productivity was too manifest to be set aside, and may have contributed to the feeling that his final years of reconciliation with the Labour Right (on which Dr Campbell is more explicit than Michael Foot was able to be) were years of disillusion and of a damping down of the fire within him.

It is not only in respect of the Soviet Union that Dr Campbell's book is illuminating on the reasons for the intellectual retreat from socialism, so easy to illustrate from the *New Statesman*. For it was predicated on two separate assumptions. The first was that socialism was not merely morally superior to capitalism, but—as has been said—also more efficient. If the main factors of production were brought into public ownership, and if production itself was directed according to a "Central Plan" and not according to the shifting vagaries of the "Free Market", then abundance would follow. So strong was this belief that Bevan himself neither showed any detailed interest in the forms that public ownership might take, nor questioned what effect the absence of direct financial incentives would have upon both management and workers. It is notable that his one contribution to Attlee's government was the carrying through of the plans for a National Health Service not itself closely connected with the core of socialist ideas—hospitals are not exactly factories—and one in which he was prepared to tolerate a symbiosis between national and private health-care, even to the extent of defying the purer socialists in his own party.

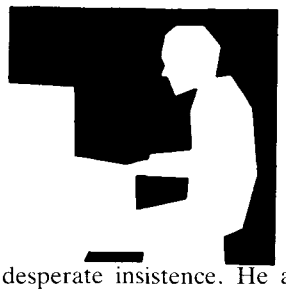
The other element was the class war. I am not referring to the Leninist version, in which a "vanguard party", speaking in the name of a class, could take power "on its behalf", but to a more conventional Marxist conception based upon the working class as the natural majority, as indeed it was in the valleys of South Wales in Nye Bevan's youth. If the working class formed the natural majority, and if its allegiances were those of the Welsh miners, then it was perfectly possible to deny the necessity for action except through the ballot-box. But after 1945, and more emphatically after 1959, it became clear that the working class in its Bevanite guise was not and never would be a majority, and that a Labour Party anxious for office for perfectly honourable reasons would have to take account of the fact that many of the votes it would require were those of people who, whether they styled themselves "working-class" or not, were anxious for the material rewards of bourgeois society (including the ownership of property) to spread to themselves.

To substitute for socialism "equality of opportunity" on the C. A. R. Crosland model was something Bevan could not bring himself to accept. He wanted the class war to be won, not fudged. Dr Campbell's book makes one feel more sympathy for his being wrong than one can feel for his rivals in the Labour Party for being right.

"For the Snark *was* a Boojum, you see. . . ."

Malcolm Lowry: Some Reminiscences

By John Aiken



I USED TO MEET Malcolm Lowry during Long Vacations in the early 1930s. My father, Conrad Aiken, lived then in Rye, in Sussex, with the first of my two stepmothers, Clarissa (known to us as Jerry); he had taken on the job of tutoring Lowry at his, and his parents', desperate insistence. He and Lowry had originally met in 1929 in Cambridge, Mass.; out of his admiration for Aiken's first novel, *Blue Voyage*, Lowry, then nineteen, had crossed the Atlantic to propose himself as a pupil. In the event, they became firm friends and drinking companions, Lowry giving my father the affection and respect he denied his own, and Aiken responding: he was a wonderfully stimulating teacher.

Although I kept a diary at that time, I am surprised to find in it no mention of Lowry (we called him Malc). He was in his early twenties; I was in my late teens and much preoccupied with my own affairs: girls and the transition from school to university. One thing is clear to me, however; there was no jealousy or competition between Lowry and myself, and this was no doubt due to my father's handling of the situation: he was very conscious of such things. Furthermore, I was destined for a scientific career and Lowry for a literary one, so there was no technical rivalry.

I remember Lowry as a large, plump, curly-headed, always cheerful young man with a rolling gait. This he has been accused of imitating from the companions of his marine experiences, but in fact he had fat thighs and when walking rolled his legs round one another to avoid thigh-rub, from which he suffered. All the jovial nautical adjectives beginning with R—rollicking, roistering, rambunctious—fitted him well. So I find it almost impossible to reconcile this person with the haunted alcoholic he became.

We all played the piano and games of ping-pong in that house (Jeake's House in Mermaid Street)—the latter on a refectory table with curved edges and about half standard width, so we became greatly expert, particularly when transferred to a full-size table. Malc also played the ukelele and sang, putting bawdy words to ragged-up hymn tunes. Sitting at the piano, he had an endearing way of leering over his shoulder during some particularly unprintable stanza. He was always very nice to me, though I do remember an occasion when I had been playing the Moonlight Sonata and he professed himself so delighted as to ask me to repeat a movement. During this, he attempted a pass at my then girl-friend, who was staying with us; but there were no hard feelings.

Those were the days of Freud and Einstein, Eddington and I.A. Richards (who was one of Lowry's professors at Cam-

PRODUCED 2005 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

bridge). Olaf Stapledon's *Last and First Men* had just appeared; and made a great philosophic impact. So—poor Jerry relegated to the kitchen—we spent evenings in cosmological speculation, or devising principles for aesthetic criticism (I had a mathematical theory of beauty at that time), or in sheer word-spinning. I recall a set of alliterative variations on the theme of Sinbad the Sailor (Finbad the Failer, Quinbad the Quailer, etc.) which seemed to us exquisitely funny at the time. My own alcoholic tolerance was fairly limited then, and I didn't take part in any of the gigantic pub-crawls of which Jerry complained. At least one of these was not apocryphal: my father himself told me about it.

AT THAT TIME the Strand in Rye was a harbour for small freighters, its channel quite deep, with piled sides and an unfathomable bottom of soft grey mud. After closing time, Lowry and my father chanced on a pile of long poles and started throwing them like javelins into the channel. Unfortunately, my father neglected to let go of one of his, and followed it outwards and downwards. The tide was low (if it had been high he would certainly have drowned), and he fell about eight feet into the mud. After a while he heard Lowry calling, "Where are you, Conrad?" Neither of them remembers how they got him out, plastered with mud mixed with blood: there was plenty of broken glass down there. I'm glad I wasn't present.

Lowry wrote most of his autobiographical first novel, *Ultramarine*, in Rye. He worked over it extensively with my father, whose avowed intent was to reduce its dependence on *Blue Voyage* (the title itself is, of course, a plagiaristic pun). None the less, I suspect that the product was stylistically more Aikenesque than the original. This appears in my father's autobiographical fantasy *Ushant* (wherein Lowry figures as Hambo), written under the nom-de-plume *Purple Passage*—a characteristically Aiken punning retort. The appearance of *Ushant* in 1952 led to a lasting breach between the two.

The first version of *Ultramarine* was published in 1933, when my father's second novel, *Great Circle*, also appeared. Both are divided into long self-contained sections—six for Lowry, four for Aiken. This was the outcome of much discussion on the need for form in fictional prose, by analogy with sonata form in music. Myself a devotee of Haydn, the creator of sonata form, I was fascinated by this and remain convinced of its validity.

Edward Burra was a frequent visitor to Jeake's House at that time, and he contrasted markedly with Lowry. Lowry was bulky, noisy, powerfully heterosexual, squandering his creativity and always ready for argument; Burra was thin, neuter, quiet and sardonic, so rapt in his painting that he could not bear to discuss it. Naturally they disliked one another. Jerry disliked them both: Lowry because she thought him a bad influence on her husband, and Burra because she did not understand him. Their quadripartite trip to Spain in 1933, described at some length in her autobiographical fantasy *Lorelei Two*, is another family episode I'm glad I missed, although it's very funny to read about.

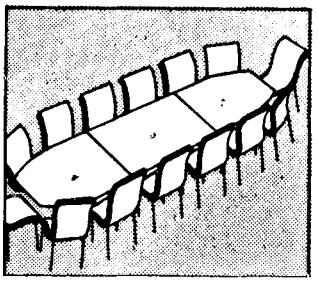
Towards the end of his university career, Lowry was rusticated from St Catherine's for a characteristic prank: with a friend who had a light aeroplane, he "buzzed" the Warden's residence at lawn level to such good purpose that the poor man had a nervous breakdown. However, I believe Lowry managed to complete his English tripos.

While thinking about this memoir, I reread *Under the Volcano*. In my view it is no masterpiece. Although it brims with beautiful descriptive writing, powerfully evocative of Mexico, this seems for the most part wayward and irrelevant, not germane to the theme: the study of the degradation of a persona by alcohol. It brims too with self-pity, since both the male protagonists are surely Lowry himself. Lowry's climax, potentially so poignant, is spoilt by its length. There is also, of course, as in *Blue Voyage*, far too much esoteric literary allusion, proliferating unchecked by a self-critical knife. I am afraid that here the influence of my father's work, no longer controlled by his presence, was baneful: the form which he would have imposed is lacking.

The Lowry whom I knew could not have written *Under the Volcano*, nor would have wished to. He could, I think, have written a powerful comic novel, quixotic, ebullient with wit, booze, and music. What a pity. . . .

Letter from Valencia

By Walter Haubrich



AS CONFERENCES go, it was not at all a boring affair. Six days of diligently endless discussion on the part of some 200 intellectuals, in the usual literary-cum-political mixture, with tumult and shouting, and hurling imprecations in the old *lingua franca* (at last French comes into its own), each convinced of the obtuseness (if not worse) of everyone else. . . . It all happened in Valencia, and why not? It happened to be the 50th anniversary of the International Writers Congress held here in 1937 "in defence of culture", during the Spanish Civil War. All the big names of the day were there, and had courageously turned up in the embattled area—Pablo Neruda and André Malraux, Ernest Hemingway and Octavio Paz, Anna Seghers and Tristan Tzara, Antonio Machado and Stephen Spender. All spoke.

Now the legend of the "anti-Fascist congress" was to come alive again, but in the name of anti-Communism. At least for a few days. The critique was of a "Stalinist deformation" (as the sectarian phraseology of the old days had it). Octavio Paz and Mario Vargas Llosa were eloquent on the subject, and it became too much for Marxists like Vazquez Montalban. Still, they were supposed to remember, even if it hurt to recall the misdemeanours and the tragedies of yesteryear. There was

PRODUCED 2005 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

the case of André Gide, and simply because he had returned from the Soviet Union and expressed doubts of Stalin's wisdom as a revolutionary leader, he had been condemned out of hand. There was the scandalous discretion and silence about the purges of dissident Communists, some in Spain (as Orwell had reported), some in Moscow. As Jorge Semprun said (and he had once been a Politburo member of the Spanish Communist Party), "It was we who tortured and murdered Andrés Nin. . . ."

Would they go on and on about the Stalinism of the 1930s? Somebody said that was old history, but nowadays there were "the crimes of North America in South America". Vargas Llosa countered with the argument that Stalinism, calling itself Castroism or *Fidelismo*, had not at all exhausted its totalitarian dangers, and indeed threatened the efforts to establish parliamentary democracy in the Latin American lands. Jorge Semprun expanded on Vargas Llosa's challenge: ". . . And now that you've criticised the home-front policies of your own governments you'll return to your own countries, safe and sound. . . . But in 1937 Michail Kaldzow returned to Moscow from our Valencia, where he had valiantly defended his régime's politics, and Stalin had him shot. . . ."

It was amost as if it was an instant replay of a half-century ago. There were the same vehement debates among Communists, Trotskyists, and Anarchists (this time without bloodshed and ideological gang-warfare). One aged anarchist speaker told how, during the 40 years of the Franco dictatorship, he had kept his revolutionary documents hidden in a cave near Valencia, and now they could serve to refute the "Stalinist lies" that were still being disseminated on Spanish television screens. Venerable debates took on a new lease of life and rage. A reputable Greek historian who lives in France shouted at his opponent—a Berliner, Professor Sotelo—and was shouted down in turn.

The present intruded. An Italian writer talked of the current debates among the German historians. A theoretician of the Spanish Communist Party talked frankly of the end of the myth of the Socialist Revolution in the West, and how the lessons should be learnt: at least a self-critical modesty. But then who pays real attention to the problems of truth and mendacity in politics and history?

Vargas Llosa took up the theme: how totalitarian régimes manipulated the past to reinforce their power in the present, and only literature was well-placed to uncover and refute the lies and disclose hidden truths. He was brilliant on the subject of the story-tellers telling forbidden stories, and dangerous thoughts. One suspects that, as a Peruvian, his own Inca history weighed heavy on his spirit. Indeed, "when the Inca leader died, not only his widow and concubines had to perish but also his intellectuals. . . . A new Inca régime needed new writers, to rewrite history anew, and re-fictionalise the past. . . . Personal truths were forbidden, as they always are in a closed society where the official version is mandatory. . . ." There was much else about the writer as the guardian of memory, as in the work of Primo Levi. . . .

THE DISCUSSION about The Intellectual and Violence was taken all too literally, and fisticuffs burst on to the agenda of the day. Somebody called out that Jorge Semprun was a "Fascist", and all hell broke loose. Semprun himself, who had been interned in Buchenwald for his role in the anti-Hitler *résistance* (and was in the active opposition to Franco), was indignant. Blows were exchanged, scuffles broke out, and ringside observers applauded and booed as the mêlée raged on. A brawl is evidently a continuation of intellectual differences by other means. After some ten minutes of chaos the Congress President, Octavio Paz, now at 73 a moderate defender of law and order, managed to re-establish peace and quiet. Embattled philosophers were separated from pugilistic poets. They went on to the next advertised theme . . . the explosive subject of *Cuba libre*, between the islanders and the exiles.

Both were represented (a rather courageous decision of the Congress organisers). Old jailers and former political prisoners confronted each other, as in the case of the poet Hubert Padilla—who for days had sat in Valencia in the company of Lisandro Otero, author and Castro functionary. For Otero Cuba was still an "especially free country", and for Padilla: "Sergeant Otero would say that, wouldn't he? . . ." One had the impression that there was some fraternisation between the Cuban literary groups outside the auditorium, but the literary civil war began anew when the sessions in the auditorium began. A progressive literary spokesman who had been

Interesting

Valencia

JORGE SEMPRUN, *until 1960 a leader of the Communist Party, summoned up a ghost when he cited the name of Andrés Nin, leader of the POUM, who was tortured and murdered by the Republicans "not mentioned here until now and never mentioned in the Congress of 1937". This encouraged me to speak the names of English poets killed in Spain who had been haunting me: John Cornford, Ralph Fox, Christopher Caudwell and Julian Bell. I pointed out that many of us who had survived no longer held Communist views. But I also said that it would be an insult to the memories of those who had died to conscript them in our cause or suggest that today they would have been anything but Communist. When I added to their names that of George Orwell, suddenly people from all over the hall got up and spoke of him. He is still rememberd with reverence here as a supporter of Catalonia.*

THIS CONGRESS **was haunted by many ghosts, as it was by triumphs and failures, the rights and wrongs of the past, and the injustices of present history that threaten to disrupt it altogether. Yet under all the discussions, there ran a very warm current of understanding, as though the deepest feeling here was a wish for reconciliation. All around us was Valencia, marvellously recovered from the Civil War and from Franco, reconciling monarchy with democracy but still, of course, containing potentialities of separatism—Castilians, Catalans, Basques—and Spanish tragedy. On the whole this was the most interesting and certainly the most enthusiastic conference I have ever attended.**

Stephen Spender

in THE OBSERVER (*London*)

PRODUCED 2005 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

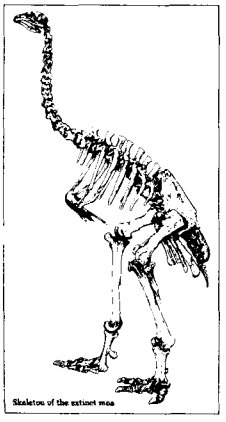
in the Spanish Army ventured the opinion that Castro had rescued the Cubans from a fate of being "Yankee whores"; and this agitated the wife of the Cuban exiled novelist, Cabrera Infante. All this was going too far, and there were attempts to ban the Caribbean theme—although an old voice from Paris 1968, Danny Cohn-Bendit, who had flown in from Frankfurt-am-Main, tried valiantly to carry on until the microphone was expropriated from his orator's grip. Another German, a Spanish Civil War veteran named Walter Janka, who still lives in East Germany, was similarly cut off; and it seemed, curiously, that the round-table which was peopled by mostly Arab writers couldn't care less.

How far away 1937 seemed! There were few writers from England (Stephen Spender, as always, was there); fewer from Germany and France. The Soviet delegation, for whatever reason, withdrew their acceptance shortly before the opening—suspecting rightly that the memories of the Spanish Civil War would scarcely bring credit to the Kremlin and its "anti-Fascist" credentials. Thus the Spanish question was returned to the Mediterranean, and to the Latin Americans, if they could stand each other in the very same room. Rafael Alberti stayed away because he didn't want to meet Octavio Paz, and Gabriel García Márquez (who lives in Barcelona) didn't want to run into his old friend and protégé, Vargas Llosa, with whom he had had a notorious ideological falling-out.

Still, the mood in Valencia was that 50 years was too long to wait for intellectual clarification and enlightenment. The next Congress would be held in ten years, in the fond hope that new themes would emerge—apart from Fascism and Stalinism, Castro's Cuba and Yankee Imperialism—for discussion and debate and, if need be, violent controversy.

Dinosaurs

Valencia



Skeleton of the extinct moa

IRONY PROVED *irresistible to the heavy brigade of special correspondents whom the leading papers had brought in to cover the Congress. Doubts about its value which had hitherto been delicately hinted at were now expressed with no holds barred. Have intellectuals got anything to talk about? Are the so-called intellectuals today the people who influence thought? Do the real leaders of thought go to conferences? Does the word intellectual in fact have any meaning? Most of these questions received a firmly negative answer. For one commentator, the novelist Julio Llamazares, intellectuals had become like dinosaurs, obsolete and out of touch with the truly contemporary issues. In his view, the only significant result of the Congress was that all the debates ended with the questioning of the role of the intellectual.*

THE REAL QUESTION **though, which the clever commentators did not ask, was whether there was anything new about this situation. They did not remind us that the 1937 Congress, for all its moral fervour, failed to achieve its aims: Britain and France were not persuaded to break their neutrality and support the Spanish Republic; Hitler's "Condor Legion" and Mussolini's "Blackshirts" continued to limber up on Spanish soil for their bloodier campaigns to come. Sometimes heroic failure is the best that can be managed: dinosaurs, in comparison with some of the more recent arrivals, have, as children at least know, their charm.**

Harry Eyres

in THE SPECTATOR (*London*)

Paris Notebook

By Jean-François Revel

Gorbachov, Soberly Seen

FOR THE PAST several years the West has been asking whether it should take Mikhail Gorbachov "at his word", as almost all the leaders of Western Europe, from Kohl to Thatcher, from Mitterrand to Craxi, have said—and some have even asserted that they are quite prepared to do so. However, whether we say yes to Mr Gorbachov or whether we say no, the principle to follow—and it seems to me to be an elementary one—must in every case be to act in accordance with our own interests rather than with his.

Obviously? Yet it appears to be obvious to fewer people than one might think. To listen to certain exhortations, we ought to be making up our minds on the basis of some obscure alleged duty on our part to "help" Gorbachov. By all means let us help him if he helps us, that is to say if his policy directly or indirectly benefits us; but let us judge that by his actions and not by his speeches or by his attempts at seduction.

Granted, we must avoid two antithetical errors: the first is to mistake the old for something new; the second is to reject the very idea that there can be anything new. The first error is actually more widespread than the second. The history of the Soviet Union and of Communism in general presents a series of repetitions that the West, duped by scene-and-costume changes, usually fails to recognise. But we may also make the error of allowing our obsession with historical precedent to blind us to real change. Despite its extraordinary resistance to progress, the Communist system cannot remain unchanged for ever. Nevertheless, even supposing that Gorbachov wants to change it and can change it, we still have to wait and see in what direction and for what purpose, as well as whether the change will be good for us.

Why should we help him to rescue his economy (as the West German Foreign Minister, Hans-Dietrich Genscher,

PRODUCED 2005 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

would have us do) if it should turn out that helping him gives him the means of stepping up Soviet expansion at our expense? There is a well-known argument—it was recently revived by Andrei Sakharov—to the effect that a Gorbachov with his back to the wall would be forced on to the offensive. One would readily concur if the years of *détente*, together with the fate of Dr Sakharov himself, had not shown us recently that a Soviet Union generously helped by the West may, on the contrary, behave in a more imperialistic manner than ever. After all, as Dr Henry Kissinger has pertinently reminded us, the most reforming Soviet leader on the domestic-policy front, Nikita Khrushchev, was the one who practised the most adventurist foreign policy, with the savage repression in Budapest, the Berlin Wall, the attempt to annex the ex-Belgian Congo, and the irresponsible installation of missiles in Cuba. So let us not mistake our own optimism for actual Soviet concessions.

If it is true that the Soviet Union is seriously looking for ways of improving its economy and if, for that purpose, it needs to reduce its military expenditure, that choice and that necessity must lead it to make us some interesting proposals for arms reduction. It will then be incumbent on us to show our appreciation of the value of those proposals by declaring ourselves ready to make equivalent reductions. But it is not for us to make the first decisive move on the plea that we ought to be encouraging the Soviet Union's reformist intentions. The method of prior, unilateral concessions has already cost the West quite enough disappointments and setbacks. It has weakened us sufficiently, without any return. So if it should turn out that the new Soviet proposals are designed in such a way as to contain the usual pitfall—if, that is, their very wording implies a greater amputation of our defences than of theirs—why should we accept them on the grounds that the Soviets need resources in order to build up their economy? If that is what they want, let them prove it by consenting to make the sacrifices that will free those resources, not by asking *us* to make them.

However, all of Gorbachov's propaganda—*glasnost* in its original sense meant "publicity"—and all his skills are aimed precisely at playing on the guilt and divisions of the West by implanting in us the curious notion that we have some kind of moral obligation to contribute gifts towards the prosperity of the Soviet Union, the welfare state of the once "noble experiment". In one of his many public performances, all executed with inimitable aplomb, Gorbachov recently went so far as to accuse the West of seeking to "block" his reforms (*Le Monde*, 27 February 1987).

In a subtle shifting of responsibilities, the burden of proof as regards establishing the sincerity of Gorbachov's desire to introduce changes thus devolves upon the West. However, it is not our job to conduct the internal affairs of the Soviet Union. If the Kremlin wants to improve the country's economic position, fine; let it go ahead and do so. We might well applaud; but it is up to the Kremlin. Again, if that is what it honestly wants, it has the opportunity to demonstrate the fact by genuinely and unambiguously curtailing its military expenditure and pulling back its invading presence in every corner of the globe. But let it not try to cut its costs, so to speak, without reducing its expenditure, as it did throughout the period of *détente*, by asking us indirectly to foot the bill for them and at the same time attempting to increase the imbalance of forces in its favour. That kind of classic duplicity would prove that the Soviet Union is once again looking to raise its standard of living without making any real military-strategic sacrifices beyond the merely apparent and superficial.

Similarly, we must not succumb to the blackmail of "democratisation". If there is to be democratisation in the Soviet Union, everyone will be delighted. But any relaxation of our distrust of the totalitarian threat must come after rather than before such a conversion. The manic Soviet penchant for seeking always to collect in advance the strategic and diplomatic dividends of changes that are either entirely hypothetical, or at best no more than rudimentary, is matched only by the eagerness of broad sections of political opinion in the West to pay up front and in full for the precious unicorn that is to descend from the heavens tomorrow. Such generosity would be wise only if it were capable of effectively pushing Moscow in the direction of embracing democracy.

However, past disappointments on this score teach us that it is better to verify first and only then modify our diplomacy in consequence—not the other way around. "Democratisation" presupposes a re-examination of the foundations and principles of the political system, just as "the conquest of prosperity" presupposes a re-examination of the foundations and principles of the economic system. These are changes that depend on the Soviets and on them alone. It is quite improper of certain elements in the West to take the miracle for granted on the strength of a two-year fight waged more against symptoms than against causes. Tackling the causes would have to be a radical process. It would involve the abandonment of Marxist-Leninist Socialism itself, implying a revolution probably more difficult to accomplish than the one that brought down Czarism.

To remind people of that fact is neither to evince a systematic scepticism nor to assert dogmatically that Communism is incapable of reforming itself. One must take cognisance of the events that occur and not confuse them with those one imagines, hopes for, or prophesies.

IN A CURIOUS OVERSIGHT, the sudden counter-blow inflicted on "democratisation" in China in January 1987 appears to have sown few doubts among admirers of Gorbachov-style liberalism. Did they even draw a comparison? Yet any "restructuring" of Soviet Russia is scarcely going to be comprehensible unless one places it in the context of the economic paralysis affecting the Communist world as a whole. Not only the two giants, Russia and China, and the beacon satellites, Cuba and Viet Nam, but also the newcomers on the fringes of the empire (Angola, Mozambique, Ethiopia, Madagascar, Nicaragua) as well as the closely connected (Guinea, Benin, Ghana), not to mention such pathological cases as Romania, are lying at the bottom of an abyss in a state of prostration for which "crisis" would be altogether too optimistic a word.

Faced with the stark choice between doing something or

PRODUCED 2005 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

being doomed, the governments of all these states will one day, willy-nilly, come round to talking approximately the same language: reforms . . . decentralisation . . . incentives . . . profitability . . . initiative . . . producer autonomy . . . wages tied to output . . . flexible exchanges . . . the fight against corruption . . . private ownership . . . glorification of the profit motive . . . even "democratisation". The key article in that programme, let me hasten to add, stipulates Western economic aid. If the decadent capitalists really love democracy as they claim to do, let them pay! Let their consciences unambiguously dictate their duty!

Alas, even subsidised by capitalism, Socialist democratisation is sooner or later going to clash with the very basis of the system: the monopoly of decision-making in the hands of a single party. When that happens, we have Deng Xiaoping suddenly announcing that "Nothing works without dictatorship", praising General Jaruzelski to the skies, and vilifying "bourgeois" democracy. Gorbachov warns that any democratisation must be measured "against the yardstick of Socialism"—a phrase that is only too clear in its implications, coming from the conventional Leninist that Gorbachov still remains.

What Gorbachov means by democracy is efficiency, not freedom. Granted, the periods of movement, the struggle of the supreme head against the inertia of the bureaucrats will always serve to throw up a few scraps of freedom, the odd relaxation of the rules here-and-there; and to those who live in that country such acquisitions are priceless. So Sakharov reckoned, and who can blame him?

But is it possible to cure the economy while preserving Socialism, even if it means bypassing it? The collapse of Hungarian-style Socialism, the panacea that drew so many dreams after it, illustrates the limits of such balancing-tricks. However, the failure of Yugoslavia is even more instructive from our point of view, since this is a country where the principal reforms advocated by Gorbachov in present-day Russia have been in effect for many years. Branko Lazitch lists them for us in the latest issue of Boris Souvarine's old bulletin, *Est-Ouest* (March 1987). Since 1950 they have included the introduction of autonomous factory managements; the abandonment of collectivisation on the land; the restoration of small- and medium-scale ownership; and the licencing of small traders, craft-tradesmen, and even some medium-sized businesses. Moreover, since the country broke with Stalin in 1948 (which meant it was lucky enough not to become part of COMECON), Yugoslavia has been in constant receipt of financial assistance from the United States—to such an extent that it is currently 22 billion dollars in debt (which, if you work it out on a per-capita basis, is the same amount as Brazil). Finally, in 1960 Yugoslavs were given permission to go and work abroad, as a result of which capitalist foreign currency, sent home by the émigrés, began pouring into the country.

Yet, these liberalisations and this open-handedness notwithstanding, the retention of the Socialist framework has eventually plunged the Yugoslav economy into a state of decay: the latest popular uprisings have emphasised its seriousness.

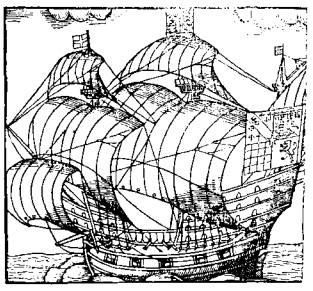
Let us suppose that Gorbachov, for his part, will be able to revive his economy without getting rid of Socialism. What will happen to his relations with the democracies? Will he be less aggressive than his predecessors were on the foreign-policy front?

To judge from the facts, he shows no evidence of unusual moderation. The dangers to Europe that lie concealed in the recent arms-reduction proposals put one in mind of previous Soviet "peace offensives". As Clausewitz wrote: "The conqueror loves peace; he would rather invade without encountering any resistance . . ." The same applies to Afghanistan. Gorbachov would prefer not to have to keep his army there in order to maintain a satellite government, but he shows no indication of being prepared to give up the latter. (In fact, he ordered the bombardment of Pakistan, which he accuses of sheltering Afghan refugees.)

The deliquescent state of the Washington administration is pushing Gorbachov to toughen his stance in all regional conflicts. Now he can consolidate the totalitarian power of his related parties in Nicaragua and Angola. The vigorous Soviet thrust in the South Pacific, which has escaped no one except Australia and New Zealand, has received a fresh impulse with Shevardnadze's well-publicised tour of the region. Finally, Gorbachov, who is so sensitive to the slightest sign of reserve on our part, has done nothing to stem the flood of disinformation and anti-Western propaganda—as those of us who remain loyal listeners to Radio Moscow well know. Only yesterday, I caught the new theme-for-the-day: that the Americans had deliberately manufactured the AIDS virus in order to sow imperialist decay in the Third World.

The West has a perpetual temptation. Every time a reforming wind of change blows in the Soviet Union it wishes to believe that that wind is also going to blow away our difficulties with the East and miraculously resolve our security problems. However, just as it is not for us to conduct Gorbachov's internal affairs for him, it is not for him to conduct our foreign policy for us.

The Tahiti Lie



IN DESCRIBING the South Pacific's discovery and the way in which it was reported in 18th-century Europe, the author of a valuable little book tells us more about the pitfalls of communication than hundreds of weighty tomes or earnest conference-hours.

The reader might well be tempted, after digesting this edifying account of a slice of French cultural history, to draw the paradoxical conclusion that the worst enemy of news-reporting is the Eye-Witness. Such, at least, is the case of the all-too-frequent occasions when that witness arrives on the scene stuffed full of prejudices and irresistibly prone to gratify those members of the public to whom he addresses his report. An expert on both Polynesia and 18th-century literature,

PRODUCED 2005 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Eric Vibart demonstrates how men have always, in every age, projected their political dreams on to distant lands—and then taken those dreams there with them.[1]

"The Tahiti lie", *le mensonge tahitien*, came into being at the meeting-point between, on the one hand, the thinking of Enlightenment Europe on the subject of primitive man and, on the other, a reality that those who discovered it—or should one say "invented" it?—failed to examine seriously. Yet (one might almost say "unfortunately") the expeditions to Tahiti were purposely made up of eminent intellectuals, scientists, and keen readers of the *Encyclopédie*. The selection produced excellent results in terms of botanical and astronomical observations. As soon as it came to customs and society, however, the *navigateurs-philosophes*, as they have been called—the Englishmen Samuel Wallis and James Cook, the Frenchman Louis-Antoine de Bougainville—too often proved blind to what they saw. Having set sail in search of a Utopia come true—the "new Cythera"—they made their own dreams the raw material of their experience.

They *needed* an honest "noble savage", so they made only passing mention of the larcenies they suffered at his hands. The noble savage *must* be a "pacific" creature, so they took only regretful notice of the tribal wars that were bathing the islands in blood at the very time of their visit. When European ships were attacked and seamen massacred, the European reporters, in writing their accounts, suppressed such nasty episodes as far as possible, and concentrated instead on the periods of reconciliation and friendship with the Tahitians. Such times were indeed rich in delights, if only because of the sexual freedom that reigned on the islands and the absence of any guilt associated with pleasure.

This formed the principal subject of contemporary moral reflection, with Diderot placing a proper and intelligent emphasis on it in his *Supplément au voyage de Bougainville*. However, reading between the lines of these accounts of voyages to the islands, we learn that the lovely Tahitian girls did not, so to speak, lay themselves out to please without a *quid pro quo*. The price of their love was always agreed upon in advance in accordance with a carefully graduated sliding scale of youth and beauty. In fact, the system was not so very different from the one that operated at the time in the gardens of the Palais-Royal and other Parisian pleasure resorts—of which Bougainville, as a fashionable rake, was a familiar and valued *habitué*.

THE NOBLE SAVAGE must also be a devotee of equality. Consequently, the *navigateurs-philosophes* never readily took cognisance of the strict division of the Tahitian populace into four social classes. Untainted by superstition, the South Sea Islander was said to worship no idols—which only goes to show how short-sighted his visitors were. The Polynesian was reported to be loosely deistic. Doubtless he had read Voltaire's *Dictionnaire philosophique*, and venerated a "Supreme Being". Shades of Robespierre! It went against the grain: but these men of the Enlightenment—who had come from a context of civilised cruelty to contemplate the natural goodness of the savage—did, nevertheless, concede (despite their philanthropic leanings) that the Tahitians practised human sacrifice and infanticide. A further regrettable aberration was that many Oceanians were cannibals. Captain Cook, that most lucid of the explorers of the period, was to lose his doubts on this score as a result of one final ethnological observation: he had the misfortune to be eaten by natives of the Hawaiian Islands.

Thus, Eric Vibart writes, "the Tahitian was never portrayed as he was but as he had to be in order to square with the essence of the dream . . ." And that, it has to be added, is why the battle against disinformation and its ageless workings, which operate inside all of us, is still as necessary—and as difficult—as it has ever been.

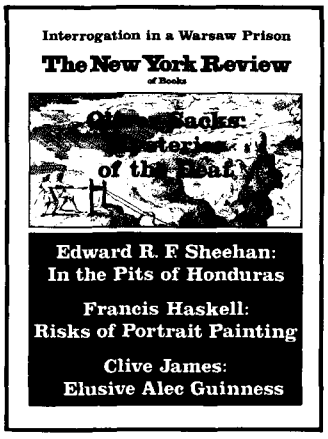
[1] *Tahiti, naissance d'un paradis au siècle des Lumières, 1767-1797*. By ERIC VIBART. Editions Complexe.

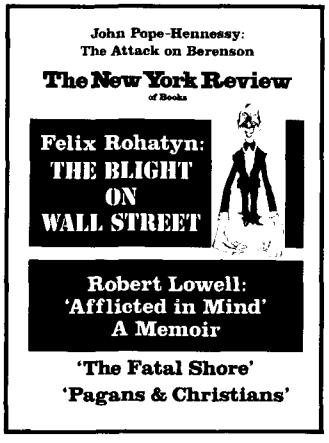
The Party in his Room

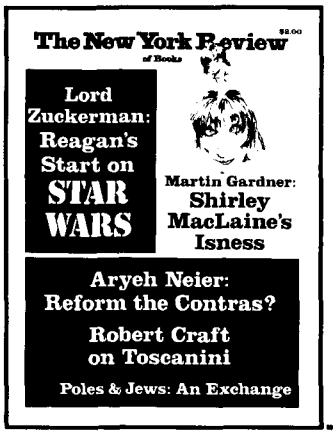
Though we can't help but intercept
each politely distanced glance
intended for some other,
we still keep up the staid pretence
of being strangers, as indeed we are.
In between, vivaciously inarticulate,
floundering in sparse seas
where no caress of cactus
even, could be conceived,
I'm needled instead by your careful room,
its sharp voiced flotsam—
despite most modulating guests—
but rebuked soon
by those calm hands of yours
that plead for you;
their ready eloquence defining
both your silence and mine.

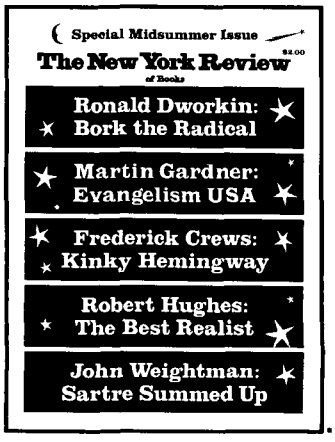
Julie Whitby

PRODUCED 2005 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED









A special introductory offer to U.K. readers

You are invited to subscribe to the best American review of books, politics, and the arts, at a *special* discount rate of £18—and save £10 off the regular subscription rate of £28.

The covers shown here give you some idea of the variety and intellectual excitement of *The New York Review of Books*. You can see that influential writers such as Gore Vidal, Czeslaw Milosz, Diane Johnson, and Octavio Paz are provided a forum in which to discuss the most important issues and books of our time.

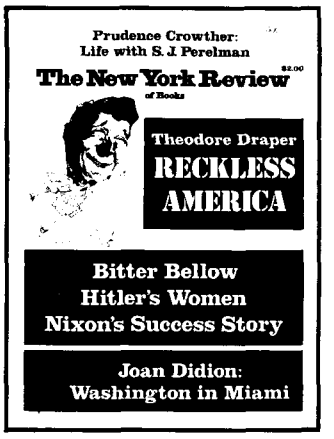
Every two weeks *The New York Review of Books* publishes criticism by writers and scholars who are themselves a major force in world literature and thought—V.S. Naipaul, Susan Sontag, Elizabeth Hardwick, Stephen Jay Gould, Nadine Gordimer, Norman Mailer, John K. Galbraith, Emma Rothschild, E.H. Gombrich, V.S. Pritchett, Murray Kempton, and more.

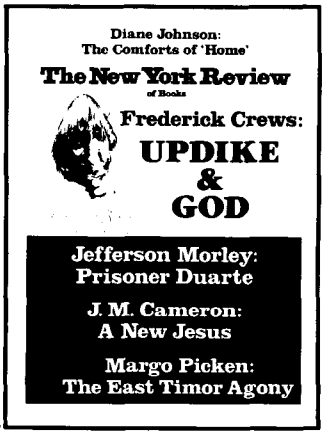
These writers address themselves to a special audience of over 120,000 discriminating readers—6,000 of them in Britain—who know that the widest range of subjects will be discussed in an exciting way. Is it any wonder that *The New York Review* has been called, "the best general review of books and human affairs to appear in this country in at least a generation"? (*Henry David Aiken, Brandeis University*)

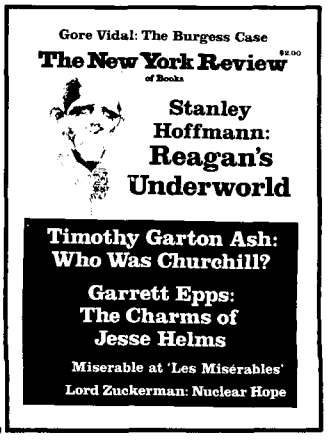
And Lord Clark wrote, *"I have never known such a high standard of reviewing and in some way you manage to keep the same tone of free intelligent comment in all the reviews."*

We will send you 22 issues of the best American review of books, politics, and the arts at the special rate of only £18—that's a saving of £10 from the regular subscription rate of £28.

We hope you will agree that this is a civilized way of introducing you to *The New York Review*. You will enjoy the convenience and the savings of a subscription, as well as 22 issues of a magazine whose founding, according to *The New Statesman*, "has had more cultural import for America than the opening of Lincoln Center."







The New York Review of Books

Subscriber Service Dept., c/o Fitzgerald, P. O. Box 923, London W2 IXA

Yes, please enter my subscription to *The New York Review of Books* for a full year (22 issues) at the special introductory rate of only £18, a saving of £10 from the regular £28. ☐ £18 enclosed. ☐ Please send bill.

Name

Address

City

Country

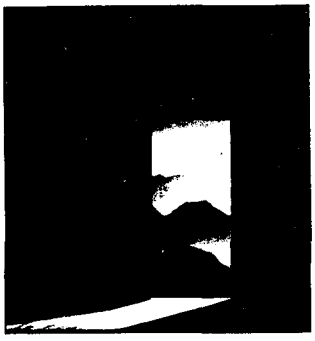
Offer good for new subscribers only. May not be used for gift subscriptions. Please allow 6 weeks for receipt of your first copy. Price includes posting from the U.K.

EN01

PRODUCED 2005 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Narrator Dethroned

The Making of "Under the Volcano"—By SUE VICE



THE DEATH OF the author is a well-worn subject these days; nine years after Roland Barthes's funeral essay, we are all familiar with the fact that only the language of the text is real, with its own life, history and sense-making capacities. The writer, we are told, does not speak; she or he is spoken. Instead of creating a new world on to which the reader can look through the transparent window of language, as the ancients held, the author lays out an opaque material display which dances to its own music. This is now a truism; but its application to one writer makes clear that the old naive realism is surprisingly at one with the new, heartless art.

Malcolm Lowry felt his life to be in some ways literally textual, as he has his *alter ego* Sigbjørn Wilderness put it of a novel he is writing

> "about a character who becomes enmeshed in the plot of the novel he has written, as I did in Mexico. . . . Idea is not new, at least so far as enmeshment with characters is concerned. Goethe, Wilhelm von Scholz, 'The Race with a Shadow', Pirandello, etc. But did these people ever have it happen to *them*?"[1]

Lowry began to lose the ability to keep life and text distinct; in the unfinished novel *La Mordida*, concerned with precisely this issue, the (recurrent) central consciousness reaches the logical conclusion of the need to write about himself. He does not merely act in a narratable way; only narration is real:

> "'But what's the use, you'll forget it unless you write it down.'
>
> 'Wasn't I writing it down?' Sigbjørn said, shaking all over and now finding the bottle of habanero.
>
> 'Sigbjørn, listen to me. We're living this, you're not writing it.'
>
> 'But my god, what earthly point would there be in living it if I didn't write it?'"

Our conception of Lowry's life is necessarily textual; when contemporaries dispute apocryphal details about the man they knew (Did Malc sit on that white rabbit or break its neck? Was his relationship with his second wife idyllic or mutually destructive?) all that we, his readers and critics, can do is compare rival sheets of paper. Lowry's fear of being caught—"would God close the book on him, as if he were an insect?"[2]—has come vehemently true; we have to rely on a collection of often conflicting biographies and testimonies, many filled with the improbable stories Lowry told about various parts of his life. There was a nursemaid who beat him with briars, the neglected near-blindness of his youth (both given a less dramatic rendering by Lowry's brother Russell[3]), the wound on his leg, gained in the Chinese Opium War, yet strangely visible in childhood photographs. This self-fictionalising was clearly a central and defining part of Lowry's personality, and also a therapeutic one. As Sigbjørn Wilderness puts it in *Dark as the Grave wherein My Friend is Laid*, "there is no dross of even the worst of these hours, not a drop of mescal that I have not turned into pure gold, not a drink I have not made sing."

Both the inherent flamboyance of Lowry's life, with its alcoholism, intense relationships, hermit-like habits, and the apparently direct transcription of its details into fiction have led to a disproportionate interest in his biography, and a consequent critical neglect of his work. What needs examination is the interface between these two realms—the space in which one produces the other. In the case of *Under the Volcano*, ostensibly the least autobiographical of Lowry's works, this takes the form of ten years' accumulation of manuscripts, drafts, and rewritings.[4] In that decade a short story, now lost, about a drunken consul, his daughter and her young man seeing an Indian dying by a Mexican wayside, was transformed into the tale of a modern Faust, his wife, and his half-brother. As Lowry rewrote the short story which he

[1] "Through the Panama", in *Hear Us O Lord From Heaven Thy Dwelling Place* (1962; Penguin, 1969), p.27.

[2] *Dark as the Grave wherein My Friend is Laid* (1968; Penguin, 1972), p.27.

[3] Russell Lowry, "Malcolm—A Closer Look", in *The Art of Malcolm Lowry*, ed. Anne Smith (1978).

[4] Malcolm Lowry, *Under the Volcano* (1947; Penguin, 1963). References to the various drafts are taken from the manuscripts at the Special Collections Division, The Library, University of British Columbia.

PRODUCED 2005 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

drafted during his tempestuous first marriage, the circumstances which surrounded his writing altered; and although there is no direct reflection of his personal fortunes in the changing shape of the text of *Volcano*, they undoubtedly exerted an influence on the different stages of the book.

IN THE FIRST FULL DRAFT VERSION of 1937, which followed a year after the original story, all the difficulties with his first wife, Jan—their quarrels, his incessant drinking, her infidelities, their none the less intense feelings for each other—reappear. Yvonne—who in *Under the Volcano* is the Consul's wife—appears here as his daughter, coming to force her father back on the wagon; Hugh—the Consul's half-brother in *Under the Volcano*—is Yvonne's young man, a tearful, idealistic student who dreams of going to fight the fascists in Spain; the Consul's wife (here named Priscilla) is absent, having given up her husband for Los Angeles. All Lowry's anxieties and jealousies are displaced on to Yvonne: large sections dealing with her life and unsatisfactory loves in Cambridge, and the series of abortions which follow, survived no further than this draft, which outlines the "sweet beginnings" of his relationship with Jan.

Like the real-life couple, Yvonne and Hugh meet first in the Alhambra dance-hall in Leicester Square, then in the Spanish royal palace of the same name in Granada—a coincidence of the kind which always impressed Lowry. Yvonne speaks to her father in this first version with a soap-operatic directness that later entirely disappears; she mimics a reader impatient with well-loved episodes of *Under the Volcano*:

> "Cockeyed, in your dress clothes, at seven o'clock in the morning, howling about a corpse."
>
> "Oh, yes, you've always been so misunderstood, haven't you?"
>
> "What are you talking about? Go away!"
>
> "You didn't know how to handle her, that's all. Anyone would have a vile temper with a man like you about the house!"

In *Under the Volcano*, by contrast, the central, burning questions, never articulated, are lost beneath layers of language and circumstance which overwhelm the characters, particularly the Consul.

There are clear traces of the return of the repressed, however, even in this earliest version. A jealousy quite inappropriate to a father-daughter relationship surfaces in the Consul's slips of the tongue and slips of vision:

> "Secretly he had always longed to appear to good advantage before Yvonne, to show her what a bargain her mother had lost, no—he grew flushed at the thought—Yvonne was her mother, his own Priscilla, Hugh a rival, a Laruelle [Yvonne's lover in *Under the Volcano*], to be dispatched."

The Consul reacts to Yvonne as if she were his wife ("Laruelle gave Yvonne a paternal look which made the Consul want to vomit. He was obviously going to strut his

World Labour Report

Volume 3

This new volume in the series addressing key labour issues takes as its theme 'incomes from work: between equity and efficiency'. It shows that real incomes—from wage employment and self-employment—have fallen in many parts of the world since the beginning of the decade. The increasing vulnerability that many workers face in their employment is documented, and these trends are illustrated with a wealth of tables and analyses based on research carried out by and for the ILO. It will be very useful for those needing up-to-date information on the world of work.
ISBN 92-2-105951-0 **£17.60**

Available already:

Volume 1, covering trends and problems in employment, social security and the impact of technology, and more.
ISBN 92-2-103604-9 **£19.80**

Volume 2, covering labour relations, conditions of work, training, and more.
ISBN 92-2-103848-3 **£19.80**

Annotated bibliography on clandestine employment

International Labour Bibliography, No. 2

Known variously as the 'parallel', 'secondary', 'hidden', 'shadow', 'informal' or 'underground' economy, this complex phenomenon has become increasingly common in many countries. The background of this economy, whose existence goes unrecognised in national accounts statistics but whose policy implications can be far-reaching, is work performed clandestinely and illegally. This bibliography gives a wide range of references on the issues of current concern and controversy, and includes monographs, articles, reports and conference proceedings in various languages and from different countries.
ISBN 92-2-105726-7 **£7.70**

Alcohol and drugs: Programme of assistance for workers

Special issue of Conditions of Work Digest, Volume 6, no. 1

This issue focuses on approaches taken in industrialised countries to assist workers overcome drug and alcohol related problems. It includes descriptions of specific education and assistance programmes, policy statements, guidelines, as well as an annotated bibliography and sources of further information on the subject.
ISBN 92-2-105962-6 **£17.60**

Micro-electronics and employment revisited: A review

by R. Kaplinsky

In this study the author looks at the direct and indirect effects of micro-electronics, and shows how various aspects of the micro-electronic revolution are linked with patterns of employment. He focuses on the effect of new technology on employment and the quality of working life in industrial countries and in the Third World. Their prospects and problems are examined and the development of their own electronics sectors, as well as the application of the new technology in the productive sectors.
ISBN 92-2-105610-4 (hard) **£17.60**
ISBN 92-2-105611-2 (limp) **£13.20**

Education and the employment problem in developing countries

by Mark Blaug

This study assesses the responsibility of educational authorities in the employment problems of developing countries. This work is one of a series of general background studies written by independent scholars in order to clarify the various questions involved and to promote the widest possible discussion of the relevant issues.
ISBN 92-2-101005-8 **£8.80**

Access and Visa cards accepted

INTERNATIONAL LABOUR OFFICE
Branch Office
96/98 Marsham Street
London SW1P 4LY
Tel: 01-828 6401

PRODUCED 2005 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

stuff now, the old turkey cock") and constantly superimposes one on the other: "You are horribly like Priscilla." In this way the Consul anticipates, or rather Lowry creates the possibility for, the (real?) intrigue between the Consul's friend Jacques Laruelle and Yvonne in the published version. In the first draft, Laruelle has nothing to do with Yvonne; but it is as if the Consul has recognised this as a possibility which goes on to be fulfilled, and connects his wife Priscilla, logically enough, with Hugh: "In the silence rancorous, chaotic thoughts sprang up at him. Vronsky and Anna: Priscilla and Hugh."

The quadrangle of *Volcano* which is to be condensed out of these separate elements is prefigured here for the first time. Here are the seeds of the alcoholic's "delusional jealousy",[5] in which sexual disabilities—it is apparently a purely masculine phenomenon—get projected on to his wife, who, he reasons, must have a lover because their own relations are so bad. In this way the successive drafts of *Under the Volcano* imitate the progress of an alcoholic, as the Consul's jealousy finds, and then loses, a real cause, its intensity increasing in inverse proportion to its justification.

IT IS NOT the fantasy of the person suffering from delusional jealousy which distinguishes the Consul from everyone else, but the degree of his watchfulness; he cannot fail to find some justification for his suspicions if he pays obsessive attention to the smallest movements of his wife's unconscious. The Consul has created around himself, as it were, a text in which his suspicions become increasingly justifiable, in which the reader too may wonder at the degree of illicit intimacy between Yvonne and Hugh/Laruelle: his obsessive eye has made his search for a reason for his agony come true.

Jan, apparently, did often desert Lowry for the sober charms of a neighbouring diplomat,[6] and the anger and betrayal Lowry clearly felt are equitably distributed in the final version of *Under the Volcano*. Geoffrey Firmin, the Consul, cannot forgive Yvonne, although he can forgive Hugh; and the unreasonable self-destructiveness of this is at times quite apparent to him. He has prompted Yvonne to take comfort from his half-brother and from Laruelle, his best friend, and makes this an excuse for not accepting her renewed offer of herself and her help. It is even arguable that these liaisons never took place. There is evidence of an unreciprocated interest in Yvonne on both Hugh's and Laruelle's part, of Yvonne's guilt and uneasiness over Laruelle, and a memory of past closeness with Hugh, but this is all strictly speaking circumstantial, embroidered with fascinated horror by the Consul. In the first version, it is patently obvious that Hugh and Priscilla have not cuckolded the Consul; by the time of *Under the Volcano*, things are not so clear-cut: both possibilities exist side-by-side.

EN ROUTE TO this final presentation of events (in which what is imaginary or fantastic, and what reality, is never entirely clear), Lowry expended a great deal of energy on the theme of infidelity and betrayal in a second draft of *Under the Volcano*—written in 1938, a year after Jan's final desertion from an untenable situation. It is as if the earlier texts represent some half-conscious former life, or jealous fantasy, of the Consul's; he is performing a Leopold Bloomian "*Show! Hide!*"[7] operation on a scene which both crushes and fascinates him:

> "Wasn't it because she wanted to be alone with Hugh, wasn't it, in fact, because she was prepared to throw all her good intentions and resolutions to the winds at one gesture, one look from Hugh, that she was so relentlessly driving them on to search for the man she was planning, actually, to abandon?"

It is as if the Consul's fantasy of treachery and abandonment has been written out in full to see what it would look like:

> "[Hugh] was staring at her, his eyelids drooped, his mouth oddly drawn; where had she seen that strange, exciting expression on his face before? Abruptly it came to her: Paris. Her blood began to beat against her temples: he had not touched her, had not spoken, but the dam was broken: the torrent was loosed. . . . Suddenly she flung her arms around his neck. 'Hugh! Say that nothing can ever separate us!'"

Traces of such drama remain in *Under the Volcano*—the sight of Laruelle in the shower and the act of entering Laruelle's bedroom prompt vivid disgust in Firmin—but only from Firmin's point of view, never as objective events. The incipient jealousy of the first draft takes on an inflamed life of its own here, which the Consul half-remembers in the final published version. Again the evolution of the novel appears to be an autonomous movement: the context changes but the words remain the same, the new sense not imposed from without but arising from the language of the text.

Laruelle's early remark, "Do you know, I think those two will make a formidable couple", contains little menace, referring as it does to two people who have every right to be together; so in *Volcano* the potential for a more threatening sense of "formidable" has to be developed, and Laruelle makes the observation partly to hurt both the Consul and himself—or at least so the Consul thinks. Now they are looking at the Consul's ex-wife standing with one of her ex-lovers, the Consul's half-brother Hugh. In *Volcano* the sight of Hugh and Yvonne bathing together is "inflamed", like so much else, for the Consul; what seems to be a factual description must be at least partly the product of an eye eager for injustice and exclusion, as later the two appear "grotesquely costumed", the adjective deriving from the Consul's own mind. The earlier scene—

---

[5] See Neil Kessel and Henry Walton, *Alcoholism* (Penguin, 1969), p.101; also Toril Moi, "Jealousy and Sexual Difference", *Feminist Review*, No. 11 (Summer 1982), p.57; and Sigmund Freud, "Some Neurotic Mechanisms in Jealousy, Paranoia and Homosexuality", *Standard Edition*, vol. 18, pp.221-232.

[6] See Douglas Day, *Malcolm Lowry* (1974).

[7] The words used in James Joyce's *Ulysses*, when Bloom imagines himself looking through the keyhole of their bedroom door at his wife Molly and Blazes Boylan committing adultery.

PRODUCED 2005 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

> "They appeared in grotesque bathing suits and stood laughing on the brink of the pool. He suspected that they were laughing at him, that what they were enjoying was the private coded joke of youth versus age. He hated them."

—has been rewritten by a man who is pursuing his own downfall ("He could prevent it even now. He would not prevent it.") and who makes sure that everything contributes to this progress—both "the subnormal world itself and the abnormally suspicious delirious one within".

In 1939 Lowry met Margerie Bonner, an ex-film star; their subsequent marriage saw the beginning of a relationship conducted largely in a hand-built cabin on the beach at Dollarton in British Columbia, with homesick interludes spent in Mexico, Europe, and Haiti. In the last twenty years of his life—he died in 1959—Lowry wrote the third and fourth drafts of *Under the Volcano*, Margerie's influence contributing the Hollywood elements, the Dollarton idyll, and the "softening" of Yvonne. The latter loses her desirousness, independence, anger, capacity for autonomous action: the second version ends with her deciding to desert her husband for Hugh, the published version with the horse the Consul releases killing her. Yvonne exchanges the traits of Jan with which she began and becomes more of a hybrid, the devotedness of Margerie allied to Jan's hopeless love in the midst of regrettable behaviour and recrimination.

In the final version of *Under the Volcano*, the last vestiges of the narrator are suppressed, and the abandonment of attempts to use other traditional verisimilar devices gives, paradoxically, an impression of *increased* realism. In Lowry's "Working Notes", the reaction Yvonne has to the news of Hugh's presence is typical of the striving evident in "novels of character" to render psychological or physiological realities by over-insistence:

> "'What,' Yvonne almost wailed; and stopped in her tracks. The Consul had taken her arm paternally, her head was buzzing, she felt a strange constriction and a twitching in her temples and she seemed to be floating, rather than walking, sick—this was impossible—outrageous —inconceivable."

The piling-up of words in the hope of communicating an emotional state is replaced by a collection which evades narration by *symbolising* conflict and agitation, through a symbol arising from an independent, disinterested voice:

> "'He's staying with me'.
> —BOX! ARENA TOMALIN. FRENTE AL JARDIN XICOTANCATL. . . .
> *Las Manos de Orlac. Con Peter Lorre.*
> *'What!'* Yvonne stopped dead."

As Lowry tells himself in a pencilled note beside this episode in its embryonic, draft form, conflict is rendered by the boxing and suspense-film posters which also distract the protagonists' attention: ". . . make clear she's thinking about

The Society of Authors

invites entries for

The Betty Trask Awards 1988

(£17,500)

These valuable awards are for the benefit of authors under 35 and are given on the strength of a first novel (published in 1987 or unpublished) of a romantic or traditional rather than experimental nature.

The Betty Trask Prize is worth £12,500 and there will be up to five further Awards of £1,000 each. The winners are required to use the money for travel.

Closing date: 31st January 1988

For full details, write with s.a.e. to the Awards Secretary, The Society of Authors, 84 Drayton Gardens, London SW10 9SB.

THE SOCIETY OF AUTHORS

invites entries for the

1988 ERIC GREGORY AWARDS

A candidate must be:
British by birth; under the age of 30;
and may submit a published or unpublished collection of Belles-lettres, Poetry or Drama-Poems (not more than 30).

Closing date: 31 October 1987

1988 SOMERSET MAUGHAM AWARDS

Travel awards of £3,000-£4,000 to an author, British by birth, under the age of 35, for published work.

Closing date: 31 December 1987

Full details from:

Awards Secretary
The Society of Authors
84 Drayton Gardens
London SW10 9SB

PRODUCED 2005 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

this deliberately in order to avoid thinking that her ex-lovers are here . . . chart her despairing state of mind—while in the back of her mind—Box!"

IT IS TEMPTING to speculate how the final form of *Under the Volcano*, its collage of autonomous verbal fragments, is related to the *modus vivendi* Lowry enjoyed at the time. As Yvonne imagines the Consul's salvation in *Under the Volcano*: "Geoffrey worked outside, longhand, as he liked to do, and she sat typing at a desk by the window—for she would . . . transcribe all his manuscripts . . . into neat clean pages", so was the pattern of the Lowrys' lives: Margerie was her husband's amanuensis, and the direct effect she had on the novel's composition has been a matter of critical speculation. Arthur Calder-Marshall, somewhat unflatteringly, suggests that much of the later "stuff about Dollarton and so on" was Margerie's: "And when you got to a stretch of Margerie it was like having a bit of *Woman's Own*. You will find there are passages in *Under the Volcano* where you can see Margerie's been going on for a paragraph or so."[8]

It is certainly true that Lowry relied on Margerie to describe or remember certain things for him: "Get Margie to describe colours", he notes on a draft page (see *Under the Volcano*, p. 330, for the finished result) of the woman's clothes on the El Popo menu. In the case of the unpublished fragmentary novel *La Mordida*, it is apparent that Margerie used her role as secretary to her own advantage, monitoring the text and incorporating parenthetical objections to certain of her husband's blithe assumptions: ". . . you've missed the drama here old boy"; "I absolutely refuse to be made out such a fool"; "After Primrose is asleep (Margienote: I never slept a goddam bit on that horrible train, I can't sleep sitting up anyhow)." There is no reason to suppose the practice for typing out *Under the Volcano* differed significantly from this collaborative enterprise.

What is clear, however, is the *non-essential* nature of the components of Lowry's works; an examination of the drafts of *Volcano* shows in action, as it were, the explosion of the realist fallacy. It is never a case of increasingly careful description of some pre-existent person or scene, but of a perpetual dialogue between word and context. *Volcano* is a patchwork of literary and non-literary quotations and transcriptions, ranging from Marston to a menu, the Cabbala to *Peter Rabbit*, and what is perfected at the end of all the rewriting, the sought-after fetishised object, is not an image of real persons, but, as Mikhail Bakhtin has it, an image of language.[9]

For example, in an early version of the bull-throwing episode, Lowry tried several times to fit in a sentence—"I don't know which you remind me of more, Mithra or John Masefield"—which never appears in the published version, but obviously had to be said by the Consul of Hugh's antics in the bullring; apart from that, where it appeared during the chapter mattered little. What demanded its presence was not an attempt at "fleshing-out" the Consul—as a side-effect, he is shown to be humorous, learned, ironic—but pleasure in the incongruity of the two literary bed-fellows.

Changing the form of a character, its identity in the relation it bears to the others, alters the sense of a scene, even—or rather, especially—when the phrasing is not changed. The Consul's hopeless wish for rescue as he spends his final hours in the *cantina* El Farolito is transferred almost verbatim from its literal setting in the draft—

> "If Yvonne, as a daughter, who would understand and comfort him had only been at his side now! Even if but to lead him by the hand, drunkenly homeward, through the stonefields as the Indian children led their fathers on Sundays."

—to its home in *Volcano* (p.361). In the draft, the Consul's wish—"as a daughter"—is merely emphatic: he is calling upon the idea of filial obligation, hoping Yvonne will give up her impatience and intolerance. In *Volcano*, the adjectives are not as important as the fact that the Consul wants Yvonne, his wife, to behave as if she were his daughter (and he has just enjoyed the services of a prostitute, having been impotent with his wife earlier in the day).

Such a radical alteration in the sense of the same sentence in different positions is an image of Lowry's method in general; he treats his own works as he does those of other writers, extracting and grafting together the components of literary sense into a coherent surface. Lowry's rewriting almost conforms to a definition of (self-) parody: repetition is accompanied by critical distance.

THESE REVISIONS PUT *Volcano* firmly on the road to becoming an example of what Bakhtin calls the *dialogic novel*: different registers of language are permitted to play around in freedom, unfettered by the authoritarianism of a controlling force, a top language, subverting and undercutting each other.[10] Lowry's way of improving the early melodrama of *Volcano* was to add layers of reference and symbolism—for example, the passages dealing with the Mexican revolution atrocities, and Cabbalistic vocabulary—by allowing quotations to speak for themselves through excising all bibliographical reference; and augmenting his "creatures", as he called them, by appending to each a characteristic vocabulary. Small details, of the kind that Barthes calls luxuries, a strictly unnecessary surplus of verbal pleasure, do not always arise from the main subject-heading, as it were, under which they appear; on the contrary, it is as if such accidental incidents give rise to the larger category. In the second novel version, Hugh notes with pleasure Yvonne riding, "like a cowboy, as if jammed to the saddle"; this is simply a voyeuristic reflex on Hugh's part, a random embellishment with no further resonance. In *Volcano*, however, it forms part of Yvonne's movie-cowgirl past of which Hugh

[8] Arthur Calder-Marshall, "Malcolm Lowry: A Different Species", *Proceedings of the London Conference* (1984), p.32.

[9] Mikhail Bakhtin, *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*, trans. R. W. Rotsel (Ardis, 1977), ch.2.

[10] Mikhail Bakhtin, *Problems* . . . , and *The Dialogical Imagination*, trans. M. Holquist and C. Emerson (University of Texas Press, 1981), p.336.

PRODUCED 2005 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

knows nothing, and which is rendered in Chapter 9 as part of the collage of movie-magazine-speak plus British-Columbian pastoral and domesticated Electra complex, which go to make up Yvonne.

In successive versions of *Volcano* the narrator is scrupulously suppressed. The narratorial remarks of the drafts are given new moorings in *Volcano*. Originally—"'I think the spectral chicken of the house would be even more terrific, don't you, Hugh?' Yvonne was laughing, although most of the foregoing, unconscious bawdry was above her head"—the narrator confides to the reader over the heads of the three diners at the Salón Ofelia. This is replaced by *Volcano*'s ". . . the foregoing bawdry mostly over her head however, the Consul felt, and still she hadn't noticed anything." Not only is the narrator abolished, but Yvonne's character trait, her naivety, is nicely balanced with a piece of wishful thinking on the part of her ex-husband, the realism of the former and the self-deception of the latter conspiring to make the whole not a piece of information about a pseudo-person, but the word of the Consul. Paradoxically, the personages of *Volcano* acquire greater reality (one critic even goes so far as to say that they are "established with all the solidity of nineteenth-century realism"[11]). But this is a reality which is the product of attention to form, not content.

Each chapter is adjusted to appear from the point of view of one person at a time; in the Consul's case, a simple change of voice from active to passive does the trick on one occasion: "Then he gently impelled the Consul before him toward the cantina" becomes: ". . . he found himself impelled by the policeman from behind towards the *cantina*". The Consul's consciousness is the medium here, and nothing can appear which only an outside agency could have registered; at the same time his notorious passivity, his inability to even want to arrest his downfall, are increased through the tightening-up of narrative consistency. A principle of construction masquerades here as a character trait.

It is typical of Lowry that in the margins of the galley proofs an extra-textual dialogue develops between Lowry and Albert Erskine, his Reynal and Hitchcock editor. Answering Erskine's query about a reference to a town called Miki, Lowry takes the opportunity to add a little creative writing:

> "Cannot find in atlas. Where? Hiki?"
> "Certainly never should have been on the map, and deservedly probably no longer is, but it *was* in Japan. Or at least everybody *called* it Miki."

A printing error—"The act of a madman or a drunkark, old bean" (cf. *Under the Volcano*, p.309)—becomes the site of an impish voice playing with this temporary collapse of decorum:

> "What about an alternate title? Under the Volcano or the Dunkird of a Drunkark?"

On noting the misprinting of "darkness": "verandas, half in darknees" (cf. *Under the Volcano*, p.325), Lowry comments that this is:

> "a subtle improvement, making El Popo a more exciting place altogether, where some drunkark, half in darknees, might even dispute with a Lucretian—*ML*."

Jokingly pleased with the typographical rendering of his sketch for the sign of a finger pointing to Parián, Lowry pretends to take it as seriously as if it were one of the characters: "I like the hand; it has a nice tweed suit on too."

Dialogue, Bakhtin claims, has no natural end-point, and the same was true of Lowry's rewriting: the acceptance of *Under the Volcano* was in a sense a false ending to the ten years' rewriting, which generated over 400,000 words as well as the 1,100 pages of Working Notes which formed the basis of the fourth, final draft. The project was an endless one, no perfect object being attainable.

Unfortunately, no arbitrary end imposed from without was possible in the case of Lowry's drinking, which followed a similar course. Afloat on an unstoppable flow of alcohol, akin to the flow of words which sustained his writing, the co-presence of a verbal drunkenness—a fascinated addiction to collecting words—and a real drunkenness in the person of Malcolm Lowry is perhaps no coincidence, his wish that he might redeem every drop of alcohol in words no idle whim. An impression of casual brilliance—look, no hands!—a fire-work display of ingenuity, wit, playfulness and pathos, is in

APARTHEID
HOW MUCH LONGER ?
SOUTH AFRICA—THE TRUTH
INTERNATIONAL SOCIETY FOR HUMAN RIGHTS
ISHR
164 pages, 16 photos. Report available now from ISHR, 27 Gloucester Street, London WC1N 3XX, England. £3.00 + 75p p&p
ISBN 3-89248-011-7

[11] Ronald Binns, *Malcolm Lowry* (1984), p.32.

PRODUCED 2005 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

fact the result of ten years' hard labour, of the replacement of character and description with a carnival of language. The elisions in Hugh's speech about the Ejidal in the published version are genuine gaps where words used to be:

> "'. . . What *is* the Ejidal, Hugh?'
> '—a bank that advances money to finance collective effort in the villages. . . . These messengers have a dangerous job. I have that friend in Oaxaca. . . . Sometimes they travel disguised as, well, peons. . . . From something Geoff said. . . . Putting two and two together. . . .'"

In this it follows Lowry's orders in the margin: "Break up as M. Laruelle's dialogue is broken up in VII. Effect will be as if dialogue is rewritten in free verse."

The result of such an apparently simple change is very complex. The crudely disguised exposition and pedagogy of the non-disjunctive draft version become part of the Consul's drunken half-consciousness of various voices as he sits in the *excusado* of the Salón Ofelia, his filtering mind so unobtrusive that the words, representing the voice of exploitation and struggle in Mexican history, seem to speak for themselves. The early ulterior motive of providing local colour and a gloss for it turns into a contribution to this anthology of voices of the hopeless and the oppressed, given human form by the Consul, Geoffrey Firmin. The author as authoritarian ruler has been dethroned; hierarchies of realism and truth-telling are dismantled. Classical realism goes on holiday—but comes back refreshed. Reading Lowry's drafts puts both writer and reader back in touch with the processes whereby art is produced.

Left Rethinking

Concerns for Freedom—By ALAN RYAN

WHETHER THERE has been an intellectual revolution in the politics of the Western world remains an open question. That there has been a revolution in the currency of political debate goes without saying; what it means for political thought as distinct from political rhetoric is another matter. We remember Tony Crosland for the slogan "Socialism is about Equality". Now Roy Hattersley tells us rather that we must *Choose Freedom*;[1] socialism is about the pursuit of liberty after all, but how real the change has been remains in question as soon as we read beyond the title. The mantle Hattersley aspires to wear is Tony Crosland's; and it is to Crosland that he appeals in arguing that we must choose equality for the sake of liberty. Is Hattersley an unreconstructed egalitarian, flying a deceptively libertarian flag of convenience? Or was Crosland a libertarian all along?

The answer to both questions is "Not exactly. . . ." There has been a sea change, and Hattersley is part of it. Crucially Hattersley repudiates the old-fashioned paternalism around which the Labour Parties of industrial Britain were built. The point of the Labour Party is not to fend for the feckless; it is not even to offer the most *efficient* delivery of welfare services. The intention is to liberate individuals from the constraints of poverty, ignorance, and lack of power. It is not to turn them into the dependents of a nannying bureaucracy. Differences between Left and Right remain, of course. If it is true that all sides present themselves as the friends of liberty, the Left goes on to claim—as Keith Dixon's *Freedom and Equality*[2] does, for instance—that equality is a means to freedom, while the Right insists that any form of equality other than equality of opportunity is the death of individual freedom.

All the same, it is important that when the Left defends equality it is only on instrumental grounds. It is perhaps not *very* surprising—not at least to anyone who has been reading the political philosophers of the last two decades—that equality has lost its charm as a political ideal. On the face of it, you'd hardly expect to find many people who would choose equal misery rather than unequal prosperity. The *homme moyen sensuel* is sufficiently self-centred to understand that what he ought to mind about is how well or how badly *he himself* is doing, not how much better or worse he is doing than other people. But many people have been unthinking egalitarians; many others have taken it for granted that the principle of diminishing marginal utility meant that equality was the way to maximise the general welfare; and above all, many people have thought equality was dictated by a concern for social justice. (If misery is inevitable, equal misery is the only fair way to share it out. . . .) Where there has been a cry for equality it generally turns out on closer inspection to be a cry for justice.

It is perhaps surprising that the old arguments about social justice have also lost their charm. Mrs Thatcher is widely seen by commentators as vulnerable to the charge of presiding

---

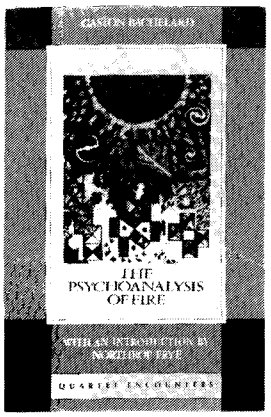
[1] *Choose Freedom: The Future for Democratic Socialism.* By ROY HATTERSLEY. Michael Joseph, £12.95.

[2] *Freedom and Equality: The Moral Basis of Democratic Socialism.* By KEITH DIXON. Routledge, £12.95.

PRODUCED 2005 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

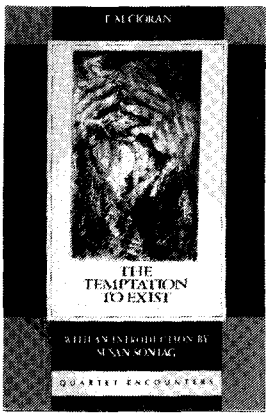
Four important new titles from

QUARTET ENCOUNTERS



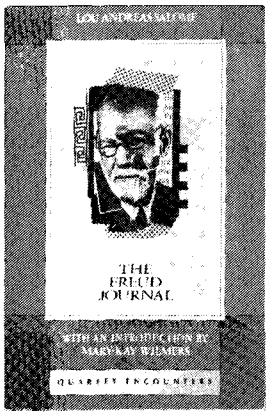
THE PSYCHOANALYSIS OF FIRE
Gaston Bachelard
Introduction by
Northrop Frye
Translated by
Alan C. M. Ross
£3.95

'He is a philosopher, with a professional training in the sciences, who devoted most of the second phase of his career to promoting that aspect of human nature which often seems most inimical to science: the poetic imagination...'
J. G. Weightman, *New York Review of Books*



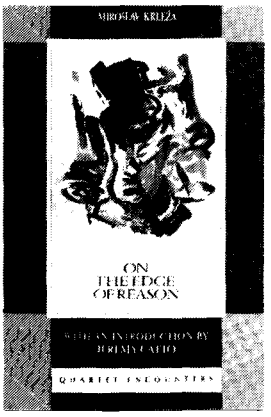
Published in Britain
for the first time
THE TEMPTATION TO EXIST
E. M. Cioran
Introduction by
Susan Sontag
Translated by
Richard Howard
£4.95

'Powerful and sustained...a philosophical romance on modern themes: alienation, absurdity, boredom, futility, decay, the tyranny of history, the vulgarities of change, awareness as agony, reason as disease'
William H. Gass, *New York Review of Books*



THE FREUD JOURNAL
Lou Andreas-Salomé
Introduction by
Mary-Kay Wilmers
Translated by
Stanley A. Leavy
£4.95

'Her journal enables us, perhaps uniquely, to see how Freud's ideas were received and accommodated by a member of the contemporary intelligentsia'
Mary-Kay Wilmers



Published in Britain
for the first time
ON THE EDGE OF REASON
Miroslav Krleža
Introduction by
Jeremy Catto
Translated by
Zora Depolo
£4.95

'Paris had its Balzac and Zola; Dublin, its Joyce; Croatia, its Krleža...one of the most accomplished, profound authors in European literature...'
Saturday Review

This critically acclaimed paperback series brings together influential and outstanding works of twentieth-century European literature in translation. Each title has an introduction by a distinguished contemporary writer, describing a personal or cultural 'encounter' with the text, as well as placing it within its literary and historical perspective. For a full list of the QUARTET ENCOUNTERS series, please write to Quartet Books, 27/29 Goodge Street, London W1P 1FD.

Quartet Books

PRODUCED 2005 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

over an increasingly unfair society; the image of the 25-year-old barrow-boy making £200,000 flogging currency futures while maternity benefit is cut by a half for the sake of the Public Sector Borrowing Requirement haunts One-Nation Conservatives, even if it doesn't much bother Nigel Lawson. And yet the accusation never quite sticks. It isn't even prosecuted with quite the fervour one would expect. Socialists are oddly unwilling to go into battle under the banner of *fiat justitia*.

YET, ON REFLECTION, it may be less odd than it appears. Traditionally, the Marxist Left have been extremely sceptical of appeals to justice; Marx devoted his *Critique of the Gotha Programme* to a savage attack on "moralising socialists" who called for "a fair day's wage for a fair day's work". The *Manifesto* denounced ideas of justice as "bourgeois ambushes", and Marx himself always attacked capitalism for its *oppressiveness* rather than its *unfairness*. He may have taken it for granted that it was unjust as well as oppressive; but the point of socialism was not to secure bourgeois justice but to liberate mankind from the chains of capital. "Abolition of the wages system" was the proper slogan.

Marx's doubts are of more than merely historical interest. What he understood was that once we get into an argument about justice, socialists cannot expect an easy victory. The workers are prone to think that an entrepreneur who has struck lucky and made a lot of money has not necessarily committed an injustice. Nobody else is the worse off for his success, and his good luck robs nobody of what they would otherwise have—a view in which they are encouraged by Professors Hayek and Nozick, but one which they seem to hold without much prompting. If the entrepreneur has thought hard, invented something novel, and worked like mad to build up a business around it—or has merely spotted a local need and built up a business around that—the workers are prone to think that he probably deserves his success.

Of course, it's a far cry from such cases to showing that members of the Guinness board who pocketed several millions for "indispensable contributions" to the takeover of the Distillers Company were taking no more than they were entitled to. . . . None the less, socialists must be uneasily conscious that many workers in feather-bedded local-authority employment protected by trade-union power seem to the man in the street an equally bad advertisement for the Labour Party's commitment to justice. If foreign-exchange wheeler-dealing strikes the plain man as something less than "a real job", being a Racial Awareness Adviser strikes the plain man as even worse.

THIS EXAGGERATES the degree to which arguments about justice have been abandoned. The form in which the demand for freedom is couched is one which relies on a familiar liberal source in the theory of social justice. Roy Hattersley's *Choose Freedom* might plausibly have been subtitled: "Choose an Egalitarian Reading of John Rawls's *Theory of Justice*." The concern for freedom which Hattersley displays is the same concern that animates Rawls's account of social justice. It is a concern for what one might call the liberal welfare-state's mixture of civil liberties on the one hand, and effective freedom of choice on the other.

Keith Dixon, writing from a Canadian university—though a member of the Labour Party and CND—thinks Rawls himself is much too timid in his defence of equality. Yet Dixon, too, finds himself in Rawlsian territory when he appeals to the connection between equality and fraternity to show that a more fraternal society would not find liberty and equality in *acute* conflict. Social justice is less dispensable than it looks to be at first glance.

The old arguments are alive and well, even if we have to learn to rephrase them somewhat. In the British context, it is striking how far recent arguments have taken place within a traditional, largely European, liberal framework. If the free-marketeers of the Institute of Economic Affairs look back to Adam Smith and his "simple system of natural liberty", the refurbishers of Labour Party thinking look back to John Stuart Mill and John Rawls rather than to Karl Marx. Among recent Conservatives only Roger Scruton has gone outside this mainstream with *The Meaning of Conservatism* (1980), and in practice he too seems to have swung away from the authoritarian theory of government defended there to a thoroughly liberal concern for constitutionalism.

THERE IS, however, one distinctively non-liberal element in socialist thinking—though it is not necessarily alien to liberalism. This is the emphasis on *production*. I do not mean the metaphysical obsession with creativity and productivity which fuels so much of Marx's work. I mean rather the empirical belief that what most determines the character of societies like ours is the fact that they are *industrial* societies, based on manufacturing and dependent on industrial growth for future prosperity. Though socialist thought has very often been "distributivist", concerned with how goods are shared out once produced, it is premised on the idea that socialism ought to combine high output with industrial democracy, that the undemocratic management characteristic of industrial capitalism cannot be a necessary condition of productive efficiency.

The challenge to show that socialism can deliver the goods is one that has to be met head on. The Achilles Heel of egalitarianism is Hayek's—and others'—claim that the poorer members of inegalitarian but affluent societies get a better deal than they would if they belonged to more egalitarian societies. The presumption is that only inegalitarian societies secure growth and a high level of general prosperity; the technical arguments against planning for which Hayek is justly famous would be of no interest unless the moral point stuck too—that a rational person would rather be relatively worse off and absolutely better off, rather than vice versa. Rawls's *Theory of Justice* makes precisely this assumption. To avoid the consequences of it, one has to be able to argue that the dilemma is a false one, that prosperity and equality run in harness rather than in opposite directions.

PRODUCED 2005 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Neil Kinnock's *Making Our Way*[3] aims at just this target. Reviewers have been unkind to this little volume—less, I think, because of any real deficiencies in its arguments (given its brevity it is necessarily rather long on assertion and rather short on substantiation) than because of Mr Kinnock's reputation as an excitable lightweight. Much of the book quite properly concentrates on the way two Conservative administrations under Mrs Thatcher have wasted the best chance in half-a-century of modernising British industry without constant balance-of-payments anxieties. That almost everyone else also says that it was a scandalous misuse of the revenues from North Sea oil to allow them to push up the exchange rate to $2.40 and to support three-million-plus unemployed makes it no less true.

What nobody entirely believes is that a Labour government would manage to break out of the constraints which brought down the Labour government of 1974-79. If Mrs Thatcher's government spent the North Sea oil revenues on the dole queues, would not a Labour government have wasted them on paying miners to dig up coal that nobody wanted at a cost that nobody could afford? Would a Labour government not have spent the money preserving traditional industries and traditional manning-levels—turning the country into a union-sponsored low-tech industrial museum? It is one thing to think that the Government has been needlessly heavy-handed in, for instance, depriving the staff at the top-secret Government Communications Headquarters at Cheltenham of the right to belong to a trade union; it is quite another to think that economic progress is compatible with the world-view of the National Union of Public Employees, the National Union of Miners, or the National Graphical Association.

TO THESE anxieties *Making Our Way* has few answers. Certainly, it is emphatic in its insistence on the need for sustained improvements in productivity, and admirably willing to experiment with a diversity of industrial styles both of management and ownership. It repudiates "Whitehall knows best", and it expresses a readiness to learn from any source whatever about the best way forward. What it doesn't really do is persuade the sceptic that Mr Kinnock would in practice be allowed to apply the open-mindedness he preaches.

Behind the *political* debate about the consistency of freedom and equality lies a long academic history. James Grunebaum's *Private Ownership*[4] picks up a subject of more than ordinary relevance to the argument. The concept of ownership in a sense underpins the conflict between equality and liberty. For it is the assumption that if people are "free to do as they choose with their own" some will do very much better than others that sustains the idea that equality and liberty are at odds. One way in which the argument can then proceed is via the claim that the loss of liberty which is suffered when the better-off are prevented from doing absolutely as they wish with their own is smaller than the gain in liberty which goes to those whose resources are increased by egalitarian measures. This is the route taken by Keith Dixon and Roy Hattersley, though the latter also appeals to something like John Rawls's distinction between *liberty* and *the value of liberty*. If egalitarian measures diminish relatively unimportant liberties among the better-off and increase the value of the liberties of the worse-off, the trade-off is warranted. One might think that if taxing one person's income forced him to go to Saas Fee rather than Wengen for his skiing holiday but enabled the crippled beneficiary of the transfer income to have a wheelchair rather than a walking frame, the transfer was justified if not straightforwardly by an increase in total *freedom*, then at least by the greater *value* of the liberty enhanced than the liberty lost.

The other way through the argument is by attacking the legitimacy of ordinary notions about ownership. If I am about to drive off in your car and am stopped, I shan't get far protesting about attacks on my freedom; the car isn't mine and I'm not free to drive off in it anyway.

One suggestion is that the way to respond to claims that we must be free to do as we choose with "our own" is that much less is "our own" than had generally been supposed—morally speaking. Professor Grunebaum's account of the legitimacy of private property is sceptical of almost all the usual accounts of its virtues and its legitimacy. The historian of political thought will flinch at some of the things Grunebaum says about Locke and Kant in particular; but the main object of the book is to put forward the positive theory that property ought to secure autonomy. This means that ownership of *people* is instantly illegitimate—raising some awkward marginal questions about such issues as my right to sell my blood—and outright, freehold ownership of anything else pretty suspect. The capitalist's right to manage, for instance, is not part of his rights of ownership, since it is an exercise of power over others which may or may not be legitimate.

Samuel Bowles and Herbert Gintis go down a similar road in *Democracy and Capitalism*.[5] They do a great deal more than this, and anyone looking for a guide to what has been agitating American academic political theorists for the

RESEARCH CONSULTANTS
Leading academics
RESEARCH ASSISTANTS
Experienced honours graduates
TRANSLATORS
Qualified, most European languages
ARCHIVISTS
Editing and indexing by word processor

Research Assistance Routledge Associates
4 Lauriston Road, London SW19 4TQ
Phone 01-947 9375

[3] *Making Our Way*. By NEIL KINNOCK. Blackwell, £9.95, paper £3.95.
[4] *Private Ownership*. By JAMES O. GRUNEBAUM. Routledge, £16.95.
[5] *Democracy and Capitalism: Property, Community, and the Contradictions of Modern Social Thought*. By SAMUEL BOWLES and HERBERT GINTIS. Routledge, £12.95.

PRODUCED 2005 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

past twenty years could hardly look to a better guide than this. They will make their English readers twitch by insisting that John Stuart Mill was *not* a "liberal", because he denied the sanctity of ownership. But the American use of the term has always been pretty odd, whether in its use to designate the moderate socialism of the radical end of the Democratic Party or (as here) in its use to designate extreme *laissez-faire*.

Crucially, however, Bowles and Gintis try to show that it is, as the saying has it, "no accident" that under capitalism there are bosses who give orders to workers and who exercise a great deal more power than they, both at work and in the political arena. On their view of it, democracy and property compete with one another as principles for allocating power; what they want is that democracy should win. But it cannot be democracy as practised under capitalism. Quite what kind of democracy it can be, and what forms of industrial and economic organisation will sustain the mixture of Von Humboldtian individualism and communitarian fraternity that they are after is not clear—not because Bowles and Gintis are wilfully opaque or self-deceived, but because it really is hard to know. They are careful not to engage in utopian day-dreaming; but the line between an avoidance of utopian day-dreaming and simply succumbing to David Hume's insistence that any project requiring a large reform of the manners of mankind is chimerical, is a very thin one.

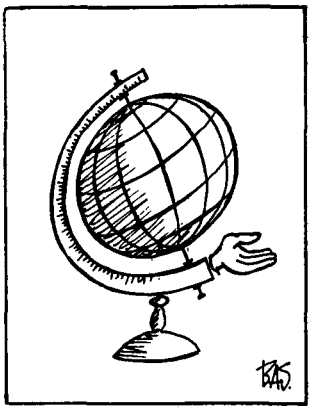
Small wonder, then, that so many of us settle for the modest reformism of *Today's American: How Free?*[6] This celebration of the 45th birthday of Freedom House displays some familiar attitudes—hostility to what is still perceived as Communist totalitarianism, combined with an unabashed willingness to use the resources of a democratic government to secure equality of opportunity and an end to racial and ethnic disadvantage. This results in some pretty large divergences between the contributors. Zbigniew Brzezinski argues for continued American military support of Afghan resistance to the Soviet invasion on the grand scale, but exudes cheerfulness about the cultural and intellectual erosion of Soviet influence in Eastern Europe; while Bayard Rustin and Morton Kondracke list the multiple ways in which Black disadvantage has worsened since 1980.

To an English reader, the view of the world outside America looks rather old-fashioned, the fears of Soviet power and even of Middle Eastern terrorism apparently more heightened by distance than by proximity. No doubt an American reader would think that such a reaction reflected the European unwillingness to take responsibility for world peace.

[6] *Today's American: How Free?* Edited by JAMES FINN and LEONARD R. SUSSMAN. Freedom House (48 East 21st Street, New York, N.Y. 10010), $15.00.

Books from "El Boom"

Some Latin American Writers—By KATE DUCHÊNE



LIKE IT OR NOT—and some do not—it was with the publication of Gabriel García Márquez's *One Hundred Years of Solitude* (translated into English in 1970) that the Latin American literature boom, "*El Boom*" as it is helpfully known in Spanish, really became world-wide. Pablo Neruda called the book "the greatest revolution in the Spanish language since the *Don Quixote* of Cervantes"; while Mario Vargas Llosa has pointed out that, like *Don Quixote* and unlike many "hermetic" contemporary works, it is a work of art with universal appeal. This view has been endorsed by critics and public alike, the publication of new editions running at one point at the staggering rate of one a week.

Yet there are still some English-speaking readers who feel left out in the cold, who jib at what they see as a certain whimsicality in García Márquez's work—who cannot, in fact, see what all the fuss is about. (While, to García Márquez, "the English are the most different people I know in the world. Everything is different." In London he thought people were continually talking to themselves as they walked down the street until he realised that they were merely saying "sorry" to each other.)

Part of the problem is one that can only be accepted, but certainly ought to be recognised: English is different in tone to Spanish. Where English is self-consciously lyrical, Spanish is unselfconsciously so; what is practical in Spanish—a shower of petals, blue banana groves—can seem sentimental to the English. Not a lot can be done about that; but everything that can be, Gregory Rabassa's translations do. The main problem was pinpointed by Márquez himself, in an interview for *The New Yorker* shortly before the publication of *Chronicle of a Death Foretold* in 1982:

> "Europeans like my books because they think this is a fiction, this is magic fantasy; but it isn't, it's Latin American reality, our everyday reality."

He added—and from a European this would have sounded dangerously like racism:

PRODUCED 2005 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

> "We don't have a rationalist mind in the way Europe does. We interpret our reality in a way which is very difficult for the rationalist to understand."

The thrust of Stephen Minta's *Gabriel García Márquez: Writer of Colombia*[1] is precisely to place García Márquez's work firmly in the context of Colombia and its history. In this lies the book's immense value, although, as narrated by Minta, events can at times read like a García Márquez novel. In 1957:

> "the two parties [Conservative and Liberal] agreed that elections would continue to be held, but that the competitive element which had led to so much violence at election time would be removed by deciding the results in advance. Only the two main parties were to be involved in the political process, all others being legally excluded, and, however the votes were cast, the two parties agreed to split them evenly."

In a more sombre vein, few people outside Latin America now know or remember that in 1928 an unspecified number of workers were massacred as the result of a strike by employees of United Fruit, the North American company with a virtual monopoly on Colombian banana-production. That massacre features in *One Hundred Years of Solitude*, where Márquez exaggerates wildly the number of the dead, not (he says) in order to distort the truth, but to emphasise the conspiracy of silence that ensued. From 1946-66 Colombia endured a period of civil war so bitter that it is simply referred to as "*la violencia*". An estimated quarter of a million people died. And violence continues: there are four main guerrilla groups in action in Colombia today, and the country is the world's largest exporter of cocaine.

In the first section of his book, Stephen Minta surveys Colombia and its history. In the second he explores the well-trodden ground of García Márquez's childhood with his grandparents (his literary style, says Márquez, is simply his grandmother's voice), his journalistic and literary careers, the well-publicised friendship with Castro, and continuing support for the Cuban revolution. The rest of the book examines García Márquez's work from *No one writes to the Colonel* (dating from the 1950s) to his *El amor en los tiempos del colera* (*Love in a Time of Cholera*) of 1985, soon to be published in English. Minta finds it "hard to escape a sense of impoverishment" since *One Hundred Years* and *Autumn of the Patriarch* (1975), and is surprisingly dismissive of one of García Márquez's most beautiful novels, *Chronicle of a Death Foretold*. Otherwise his analyses are clear and illuminating: this is a book not merely for the student, but for anyone interested in Márquez.

THE MEXICAN Carlos Fuentes has complained that, since the publication of *One Hundred Years of Solitude*, "just as all Sicilians are presumed to be Mafiosi", so all Latin-American literature is dubbed "magic realism". Fuentes, the son of a

[1] *Gabriel García Márquez: Writer of Colombia*. By STEPHEN MINTA. Jonathan Cape, £10.95.

The New History and the Old
GERTRUDE HIMMELFARB

In *The New History and the Old* the distinguished intellectual historian Gertrude Himmelfarb offers a marvelously written, entertaining critique of current fashions in the writing of history – social history, psychoanalytic history, quantitative history, marxist and neo-marxist history, *mentalité* history.

'The state of affairs which she describes urgently calls for the sort of analysis and confrontation that she applies to it . . . Professor Himmelfarb knows the enemy and makes no bones about his devilish identity; at the same time, she commands a skill in inflicting mortal wounds without a trace of offence one must envy. I wish there was a medal one could award.' Sir Geoffrey Elton

Belknap
£15.95 Cloth 224pp 0-674-61580-8

HARVARD
UNIVERSITY PRESS
126 Buckingham Palace Road London SW1W 9SA

WALTZING WITH A DICTATOR

The Marcoses and the Making of American Policy

Raymond Bonner

'A stunning book — one of the best jobs of reporting about foreign policy I've ever read.'
The New York Times

MACMILLAN
—LONDON—

£16.95

PRODUCED 2005 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

diplomat, joined the Communist Party in the early 1950s, but later returned to his studies in international law and diplomacy, holding posts at the University of Mexico and in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. In 1959 he resigned in order to devote himself to writing, and in 1962 achieved worldwide recognition with the publication of *The Death of Artemio Cruz*—in which modern Mexico is seen through the eyes of a dying "self-made" tycoon.

Where *Artemio Cruz* succeeded so brilliantly—complex in structure, but always clear—*A Change of Skin*[2] fails. Fuentes seems to want to explore the history of Mexico from Montezuma (and before); Mexico's relationship to North America and its European cultural heritage; the questions of individual and collective guilt and the possibilities of redemption; and the nature of individuality, with "the eternal dialogue between male and female" thrown in for good measure. The themes are vast but fascinating and probably coherent. But Fuentes is known for writing each book in a different style, and here—presumably because he feels it is the way to tackle themes of merging personalities and shifting realities ("It's a hall of mirrors, it's always been a hall of mirrors, but only now do we understand")—he adopts in some sections a semi-stream-of-consciousness which, in parodying the "hippy", sometimes comes perilously close to the real thing.

THE BEST sections are narrative in thrust. There is a wonderfully written and horribly upsetting description of the concentration camp at Terezin in Czechoslovakia—a conscientiously detailed description of the buildings, as if surveying them for damp. Then there are the descriptions of the ex-Nazi's student days in Prague, and his moving encounter with a teenage recruit when he is already on the run from the Allies at the end of the War. Strangely, one of the ways in which the novel succeeds best is as a love story, as the history of the central couple—Javier, the Mexican professor, and his North American Jewish wife, Elizabeth—is slowly pieced together.

Naturally, there is a double ending, the second part consisting of the mock trial of the ex-Nazi by a group of stoned and implacable hippies. The narrator (who, for reasons best known to Carlos Fuentes, is a cab-driver whose personality seems to blend with Javier's) wants to protest that individual guilt and punishment are irrelevant, but his will fails him. And anyway, he knows what the hippies would say:

> "What Franz did or didn't do doesn't matter, man, it's just that he is the old and we are the new, and the old must shake over out of the way. Yes, the cycle has ended and the new pyramid must be built upon the tired shell of the old."

The "new" is implacable, the "old" is inescapable; the past is always in the present. Mexico has to take on board its past and its present, and try to salvage a little humanity in between.

OCTAVIO PAZ, Mexico's best known and internationally acknowledged poet, also believes that "there is a Mexico which is buried but alive. Or, more accurately, there is in Mexican men and women a universe of buried images, desires and impulses" (a universe which, alas, remained largely buried for me after reading Carlos Fuentes' novel).

As Michael Schmidt, the translator, points out in his preface to the first British collection of Paz's essays, *On Poets and Others*,[3] Octavio Paz has always posed something of a problem for the Latin American Left. As early as 1951, he published a horrified account of Stalin's labour camps, which was regarded as a "betrayal". Then in 1968 he resigned as Ambassador to India in protest at the massacre of students during the Olympic Games in Mexico City. When he returned to Mexico two years later, he refused to slot into the role of guru assigned him as a result of his resignation.

The essays in *On Poets and Others* go back as far as 1943. They range from short, airy descriptions of a visit to Robert Frost in the mountains ("You've got to read a few books well and frequently"), to a dense examination of "Baudelaire as Art Critic"; from a frustrated but ultimately affectionate examination of Sartre and his work, to further indictments of Soviet totalitarianism in two essays on Solzhenitsyn. There are essays too on Walt Whitman, William Carlos Williams, Dostoevsky, Luis Buñuel, Luis Cernuda, and others, some of whom Paz knew personally.

From this rich and intriguing collection Paz emerges as a man of strength and principle, determined to maintain his integrity against all forms of ideology—Communist, "consumer", or Christian. The ideologue is anathema. According to Paz, he emerged when God "died" (and Dostoevsky saw him first):

> "He calls others *comrades* but he never talks to them: he talks to *his idea*. Nor does he speak to the *other* which we all carry within us. He doesn't even suspect its existence. . . . The ideologue is the spiritual cripple: half of him is missing."

Those for whom it might logically be supposed that God has not died fare little better:

> "At the root of Christians, as at the root of their descendants the Marxists, I perceive a terrible self-disgust which makes them hate and envy others, especially if those others are pagans."

And if, in Paz's eyes, the "Eastern bloc" is the home of the ideologue, the Western democracies too come under fire:

> "If liberty is to survive the bureaucratic state, it ought to find a different alternative to the ones that capitalist democracies offer today. . . . Western democracies have protected and continue to protect all the tyrants and petty tyrants of the five continents."

Paz is deeply saddened by the history of Spanish-Americans: "When will we evolve our own political thought?" One can't help wondering what alternatives are left. He offers no answers, except a purely personal one: "In a century of false testimonies, a writer becomes the witness to

---

[2] *A Change of Skin*. By CARLOS FUENTES. Translated by SAM HILEMAN. André Deutsch, £16.95.

[3] *On Poets and Others*. By OCTAVIO PAZ. Translated by MICHAEL SCHMIDT. Carcanet, £14.95.

PRODUCED 2005 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

man." For Jorge Guillen, Paz says, "Language is a dike against the nameless chaos". And for Paz too, words, by naming things, give them substance and express in the face of both the "nameless chaos" and the "atrocious history" of the 20th century, "the other which we all carry within us"—even after the death of God.

When his friend and mentor, André Breton, died, Paz wrote that Breton had experienced instants that went beyond the limitations of time ("I call these instants poetic, though they are common to all men"), instants that "coincided with the *other* time . . . this experience . . . is invulnerable and untouchable: it is beyond time, beyond death—beyond us. *Knowing* this reconciles me to his recent death and to all death." Having rejected political ideologies and organised religion, Paz is still looking for an absolute of some sort, and—the writer's way out—filling the gap with words.

Not every essay in *On Poets and Others* is about the Meaning of Life. There is entertainment as well, and there are some helpful hints for would-be essayists who must "master the difficult art of using three dots. . . ."

A GOOD DEAL of entertainment (and a masterful use of dots) is to be found in Mario Vargas Llosa's *The Perpetual Orgy*,[4] a critical analysis of Flaubert's *Madame Bovary*, first published in Spanish in 1974 and now expertly translated into English by Helen Lane. Vargas Llosa is best known, in Peru as elsewhere, for his novels—including *Aunt Julia and the Scriptwriter*, the award-winning *The War of the End of the World* and, most recently, *The Real Life of Alejandro Mayta*.[5] But he has devoted considerable time and energy to literary criticism, including a study of García Márquez's work, *History of a Deicide*—sadly, never yet translated into English.

The title of Vargas Llosa's Flaubert book is taken from one of Flaubert's letters to Mademoiselle Leroyer de Chantepie: "The one way of tolerating existence is to lose oneself in literature as in a perpetual orgy." In his introduction, Vargas Llosa divides literary criticism into three forms: the first "subjective" (what the novel means to the reader); the second—for want of a better word—"objective" (what the novel is in itself); and the third historical (how the novel fits into the reader's subjective view of the history of literature). The book divides into three corresponding sections.

Vargas Llosa first reveals his long-standing, unrequited passion for Emma Bovary. He fell in love with her in the *Classiques Garnier* edition, and never looked back. He adores her "incurable materialism", her desires and fantasies (fantasy for Vargas Llosa is a force which contains within it a possibility for change in the world), and, of course, the fact that since Emma is enshrined in a novel, he can return to find her whenever he wants her, imperfect as he left her, at any point in her progress or decline. He also gives a convincing synopsis for "Flaubert and Shoe Fetishism", an unwritten research paper; and he identifies what is, in fact, the central point of his book, namely that "Rebellion—vulgarity—violence—sex" are the elements necessary for him to be interested in a novel at all; "it is form that makes this indivisible content what it is".

The second section deals with how Flaubert came to write the novel; with his sources (poor Delphine Delamare scandalising the village with her black and yellow curtains); with his writing method; and with his habit of treating people in the course of his researches as if they were corpses under his father's scalpel. Detailed and lucid analysis pinpoints the stylistic innovations which make *Madame Bovary* "the first modern novel"—in particular, its use of *style indirect libre*, which enables the voice of character and narrator to interchange and merge within a sentence with no noticeable gear-shift. Vargas Llosa, claiming that Flaubert was the first to use this technique, later adopted by Hemingway and many others, stresses the book's essential pessimism, prefiguring the Sartrean "nausea" with its objectification of people and humanising of things. A short and fascinating section is entitled "Madame Bovary, a Man".

Men seem to love Emma Bovary while women don't. Vargas Llosa, scrupulously feminist, concludes that Emma's "masculinity" is "a striving for freedom, a way of fighting against the miseries of the feminine condition". But she is a "tragic feminist—because her battle is an individual one,

[4] *The Perpetual Orgy*. By MARIO VARGAS LLOSA. Translated by HELEN LANE. Faber, £9.95.

[5] *The Real Life of Alejandro Mayta*. By MARIO VARGAS LLOSA. Translated by ALFRED MACADAM. Faber £9.95, paper £3.95.

WRITERS' BURSARIES 1987/88

The Arts Council intends to award three bursaries of £5,000 to poets whose work is of high literary quality and who have had at least one collection published. The bursaries will be given to finance a period of concentrated work on the recipients' next book.

The scheme is open to writers who are resident in England and who write in English.

Further details and application forms are available from:
The Literature Department, Arts Council,
105 Piccadilly, London W1V 0AU.
Tel: 01-629 9495 ext. 377.

The closing date for completed applications is 31 December 1987.

ARTS COUNCIL

PRODUCED 2005 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

more intuitive than logical, a contradictory one since it in fact seeks what it rejects, and one doomed to failure—deep in her heart of hearts Emma would like to be a man." Baudelaire, too, found that "Madame Bovary, in the most energetic and ambitious elements of her character, as in her strong capacity for dreaming, remained a man". It is an entertaining thought that Vargas Llosa and Baudelaire, perhaps even men in general, might be admiring Emma Bovary largely for what they perceive as their own qualities ("*Madame Bovary, c'est moi*"). Would they have liked Delphine Delamare as much, with her curtains, her lovers, and her miserable failure to kill herself?

Not without irony, Vargas Llosa quotes a letter written by Flaubert to his friend Ernest Feydeau, whose wife was on her deathbed. Flaubert wrote sympathetically:

> "Poor little woman! It's frightful! You have and will continue to have fine *tableaux* and will be able to make fine studies. It is a dear price to pay for them. The bourgeois have little notion that it is our hearts that we serve up to them."

But then he's off about himself again.

The last section of the study is entitled "The First Modern Novel". Like Flaubert, Vargas Llosa believes that literature is intrinsically subversive—it has "this possibility of forever going beyond what life permits"—and that what makes literature is form. The last few pages are a moving examination of how the desire for form, for fashioning a work of art, was able to transform bile even on the scale of Flaubert's ("Shit keeps coming to my mouth, as in a strangulated hernia. But I want to keep it, fix it, harden it; I want to make a paste of it and smear the nineteenth century with it") into "a novel capable of conjoining originality and communication, social value and quality".

VARGAS LLOSA's early novel, *Captain Pantoja and the Special Service*,[6] has a liberal dose of his prerequisites: "Rebellion—vulgarity—violence—sex"—particularly sex. A burlesque on military and religious fanaticism, originally published in Spanish in 1973, it has just been reissued in paperback by Faber in the highly praised translation by Gregory Kolovakos and Ronald Christ.

Vargas Llosa had already taken a sideways look at the military in his first novel, *A Time of the Hero* (1962), set in the Leoncio Parado Military Academy where he spent two years of his school life. (Copies of it were actually burned in the streets of Lima.)

Captain Pantoja is the Honourable Subordinate—M. Hulot in a *képi*. Sent into the wilds of the Amazon to set up a "Special Service" of whores for the men of remote jungle units, who are finding the Amazon too steamy for them, the innocent Captain is appalled, but determined to do his duty. Quickly seduced by statistics and the charm of Doing the Job Properly, he writes detailed "Top Secret" reports:

> "A convoy of ten specialists chosen from among those with the greatest output would be in the position to provide 4,800 simple and normal services per month (a six-day work week), working full time and without accident. Which means that in order to meet the maximum desired objective of 104,712 monthly services, a permanent corps of 2,115 specialists in the maximum category would be required. A fantastically high figure at this time, of course."

The Special Service flourishes. All the local whores who have been working the streets for years are anxious to join "Pantiland", which offers security and opportunities for travel. The Special Service for Garrisons, Frontier and Related Installations acquires its own colours and a regimental song (sung to the tune of *The Mexican Straw Hat*). And as the SSGFRI thrives, so in the depths of the jungle does the charismatic cult of the shadowy Brother Francisco, who encourages among his followers, "brothers and sisters of the Ark", the crucifixion of small animals (frogs on cardboard crosses) and occasionally, almost by accident, small children or old people.

Pantoja experiences considerable job satisfaction, but has unaccountable nightmares of monkey women on leads. His wife leaves him (to return later) and he begins to feel the need to test the abilities of new recruits personally. He is as earnest and upright as ever: it is simply his frame of reference which has changed.

The SSGFRI becomes so successful that it's an embarrassment to the Army, more trouble than it's worth, and is dissolved at the same time as Brother Francisco's movement is destroyed. Pantoja, still upright, still bewildered, is hoist on his own petard. Though he is punished for carrying to their logical conclusion the orders given to him by the Army, his faith in that institution remains unshaken. Packed off to the freezing mountains around Lake Titicaca, he continues his life of devoted service.

Meanwhile, back at headquarters, relieved to have got rid of the twin thorns in its side, the Army settles down to a regular life:

> "General Scavino unbuttons his fly. . . . 'This will be the peaceful country of the good old days once again. A little affection as a prize, Peludita.'"

But whoring now includes crucifixion games:

> "Lieutenant Santana pants, goes, comes, decorates, ties, knots, measures. 'And now close your eyes and play dead, Pichuza. Just like that. Poor little specialist, oh, how awful, my little crucified girl. . . .'"

The novel ends as it began, with Pantoja's wife in the freezing cold of a mountain morning urging, "Wake up, Panta, wake up".

Captain Pantoja is a funny novel with a strong sinister undertow. Pantoja is a fanatic at least as dangerous as Brother Francisco because his sense of honour and duty can only take him where his orders lead. It is, unfortunately, possible to be a dangerous subordinate as well as a dangerous leader.

[6] *Captain Pantoja and the Special Service*. By MARIO VARGAS LLOSA. Translated by GREGORY KOLOVAKOS and RONALD CHRIST. Faber, £3.95.

PRODUCED 2005 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Books Encountered

Original Copy: Selected Reviews and Journalism 1969-1986. By JOHN CAREY. Faber, £9.95.

Sparkling, informative, irreverent and terse, these articles were worth collecting but badly need an index: jocular titles are little help. Ten TV reviews show Professor Carey as a tart moralist; but the best piece in the book is his BBC Radio-3 talk magisterially "placing" Q. D. Leavis.

Westminster Abbey. By EDWARD CARPENTER and DAVID GENTLEMAN. Weidenfeld & Nicolson, £12.95.

A crisp, learned, and affectionately respectful text by the former Dean of Westminster combines history, guidebook, and personal reminiscence. The drawings by David Gentleman are, well, Gentlemanly—part-caricature, part-spidery, part-architectural, and all looking no more than preliminary sketches.

The Landscape of William Shakespeare. By MICHAEL JUSTIN DAVIS. Photographs by SIMON MCBRIDE. Webb & Bower/Michael Joseph, £14.95.

Stunning gazetteer, with woodcuts, maps, title-pages, engravings, and reproductions of paintings as well as evocative photography. The text conjectures about the Bard's physical background, taking in many places beside Stratford and London, and adding a chronology, bibliography, and index as well as a list of the Works. Too big for the glove compartment, but a visitor's *vade mecum*.

The Manzoni Family. By NATALIA GINZBURG. Carcanet, £12.95.

Although the winner of many prizes in Italy, the 71-year-old Natalia Ginzburg seems never to have won adequate recognition in the English-speaking world. This book may help. It treats the extended family of the author of *I Promessi Sposi* virtually as a radio feature, letting diaries and correspondence speak and re-create the past as vividly as in a novel.

The Novel and Authenticity. By DAVID HOLBROOK. Vision/Barnes & Noble, £16.95.

Characteristically quirky and eclectic consideration of morality in fiction, beginning with *Mansfield Park, What Maisie Knew*, and *The Awkward Age*, finding ethical flaws in *A Passage to India* and *Saturday Night and Sunday Morning*, and denouncing degraded and callous elements in many much-praised modern novels.

George Gershwin. By ALAN KENDALL. Harrap, £10.95.

Pleasantly illustrated but sadly untechnical account of the composer of *Porgy and Bess* and *Rhapsody in Blue*, with no musical quotations and only one song lyric (Ira Gershwin's "Where's the Boy?"), but a useful catalogue of works—a surprising number of them deservedly forgotten despite the famous gems.

The Letters of D. H. Lawrence. Vol. IV: June 1921-March 1924. Edited by WARREN ROBERTS, JAMES T. BOULTON, and ELIZABETH MANSFIELD. Cambridge University Press, £35.00, $59.50.

Nearly 850 letters, more than 300 of them previously unpublished, from the period of *Aaron's Rod, Kangaroo*, and *St Mawr*, with Lawrence in Germany, Austria, Italy, Ceylon, Australia, the South Seas, San Francisco, Mexico, the USA, England, and France. The usual pattern was restlessness, then resentment of the new perch: but sharp remarks punctuate often telegraphic notes: e.g. "Murry is an uncertain fish". Well said.

Edgar Allan Poe: The Design of Order. Edited by A. ROBERT LEE. Vision/Barnes & Noble, £17.95.

Ten uneven critical essays. The best are by two ENCOUNTER contributors, Eric Mottram and John Weightman—the former on Law, Lawlessness and Philosophy, the latter on "Poe in France: A Myth Revisited". David Murray has the thankless assignment of Poe's poetry, and uses it to illuminate Romanticism, but hardly to redeem the "contrived and mechanical" verse.

Playing for Time. By JEREMY LEWIS. Collins, £12.95.

Cheerful autobiography of a discerning if extrovert publisher, from prep school to advertising agency to Trinity College, Dublin, and on to an occupation for gentlemen. The clichés come thick and fast, but the geniality and pace of the tale give it the impetus of a born raconteur in good form.

On Boxing. By JOYCE CAROL OATES. With photographs by JOHN RANARD. Bloomsbury, £9.95.

"I ain't never liked violence", says Sugar Ray Robinson, in one of Joyce Carol Oates's many juicy quotations. Irony, compassion, excitement, history, sociology, economics, expertise and anecdotes—all are crammed into 118 luminous pages, arranged as short reflections rather than a continuous argument, and most elegantly printed.

The City as a Work of Art: London, Paris, Vienna. By DONALD J. OLSEN. Yale University Press, $35.00, £19.95.

Generously proportioned (coffee-table size) and scholarly examination of the three cities in their various roles as luxury, ornament, home, playground, and document, with ample telling illustrations and recondite quotes. Professor Olsen displays the same firm and quizzical irony as in his less extensive *The Growth of Victorian London*.

The Painted Banquet: My Life and Loves. By JOCELYN RICKARDS. Weidenfeld & Nicolson, £14.95.

Frank but unsalacious, these memoirs by Mrs Clive Donner throw kindly light on most of the old flames, who include Graham Greene, John Osborne, and A. J. Ayer. As a painter and designer, the author has a camera eye. E.g. on Christopher Isherwood: "He was small and nut-brown; his hair, a mixture of greenish brown and grey, was cut short, and underneath verandahs of spiky eyebrows were the most alive blue eyes I have ever seen."

European Technological Collaboration. By MARGARET SHARP and CLAIRE SHEARMAN. Royal Institute of International Affairs/Routledge & Kegan Paul, £5.95.

A brief history, appraisal, and cost-benefit analysis of European efforts to transcend national markets and keep up with the USA, Japan, and other competitors. The authors conclude that political and strategic considerations outweigh economic and commercial arguments for collaboration.

The Rules are No Game: The Strategy of Communication. By ANTHONY WILDEN. Routledge & Kegan Paul, £25.00.

Garrulous, magpie-minded ragbag of a book, chock-full of fascinating gobbets but disordered, condescending, and tendentious: an up-to-the-trendy-minute version of Sellar and Yeatman's *And Now All This*. The author teaches communications at Simon Fraser University in British Columbia. His lectures must be fun, but I pity his students at exam-time.

Worlds Apart: Travels in War and Peace. By GAVIN YOUNG. Illustrations by SALIM. Hutchinson, £14.95.

Not a fifth masterly travel book, but a shrewd selection of past articles, mostly from *The Observer* or its colour supplement, by its own observant, courageous, and witty veteran correspondent. The territory covered includes Viet Nam, the Congo, China, Bangladesh, Samoa. . . . The luggage labels may have faded: the pieces have not.

R.M.

PRODUCED 2005 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

DOCUMENT

Samizdat from Moscow

An Editor Preaches "Revolution"

STRELYANYI: *Novy Mir* is in conflict with its correspondents. Everybody who writes to *Novy Mir* thinks that he ought to be published, and, if refused, he demands a meeting with the chief editor, calls us "bureaucrats", and wants to speak with nobody lower than the chief when he comes into the department.

The complete absence of citizens' rights in past years led to a fall in the level of culture. People try to take everything by storm: buses, stores, jobs, graduate studentships. I have to deal every day with insolence, attempts to frighten me by complaining to "higher authorities", threats. People come to the editor's office in order to get important problems solved; they think they can reach Gorbachov through the magazine. They see the magazine as a relay-point. That's what level people's ideas about the press are at; that's the general cultural level. They write to me: "The forests and beehives are dying. It can't go on like this!" But this is material for the newspapers, not for us. The editor's office is swamped with literary works about important problems. But the public demands explanations of why we don't print this-or-that. They don't recognise our right to choose our themes ourselves. And we're not obliged to give anybody a report on what our selection criteria are.

You can understand these people. In conditions of non-democracy a person has nowhere to turn. A young fellow recently came running in to see me with seven lines about the deterioration of schools and three hundred signatures, and tells me: "*Sign!*"

"Why?", I ask him.

"We're going to send it higher up!", he says.

I ask a few questions. Turns out he's a fifth-year student in the history department at a teachers' college. That's people's conception of democracy, thick-headed illiteracy.

QUESTION FROM THE FLOOR: *Do you think that the press should be independent from Party control?*

STRELYANYI: Yes. We need a press that is independent of the Party bureaucracy and the state apparatus. An independent press is a press that reports on killed and wounded in Afghanistan, gives daily information on radioactivity at Chernobyl, is present at sessions of the Politburo, and reports on who said what.

—That can't be.

STRELYANYI: If we want to eat our own bread, not American bread, then there will be an independent press.

—Is a law on the press being prepared?

STRELYANYI: I don't know, there's no *glasnost*. The successes of *perestroika* can be seen mainly in the differences between the press today and the press during Brezhnev's time. But they're not very big.

—Do we have organised crime?

STRELYANYI: There is such a problem. It should be written about. . . . Freedom [*svoboda*] is not a means. Freedom is the goal itself. Under present conditions, the press is dependent on the Party and state bureaucratic apparatus.

—That's rubbish!

STRELYANYI: See what we're like! An Englishman would say: "Excuse me, but I don't agree with everything you say, I have a different point of view." You fly off the handle right away! But I'm not against disagreements. The fate of *perestroika* depends on whether we take sides. Whether we stand on different sides of the barricade.

—What do you think of Afanasiev's speech [Academician Afanasiev, the editor of *Pravda*—"Truth"]?

STRELYANYI: He needs *constructive* truth. [Laughter][1]

—Does the Party need confrontation?

WE HAVE *recently obtained (via Radio Liberty) a "samizdat" transcript of exchanges between Anatoli Strelyanyi, a member of the Editorial Board of the literary monthly "Novy Mir", and the Komsomol "Aktiv" of Moscow State University on 15 May 1987.*

Anatoli Ivanovich Strelyanyi (b. 1939), author and publicist, is a graduate of the journalism department of Moscow State University and a member of the USSR Union of Writers. He worked as a correspondent on agricultural affairs for "Komsomol skaya Pravda" from 1961, and as a Novosti Press Agency commentator in the 1970s. He was first identified as a member of the "Novy Mir" editorial board in issue No. 2 of this year.

[1] Strelyanyi is referring here to Afanasiev's statement that "to give the full constructive truth in our newspapers, on our screens, and in our radio broadcasts is the sacred task of Soviet journalism" (*Pravda*, 15 March 1987; *Sovetskaya Kultura*, 17 March 1987; *Zhurnalist*, No. 4, 1987, p. 8). Afanasiev was speaking at the Sixth Congress of Soviet Journalists in March 1987.

PRODUCED 2005 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

STRELYANYI: There are already two parties in the Party, under the label "*CPSU*". The revolutionary nature of *perestroika* resides in the fact that the people should have freedom.

—Can the press be completely independent? After all, Lenin spoke of control of the press!

STRELYANYI: Control of the press was necessary in the underground, and that's exactly what Lenin was talking about.[2] But who told you that now? Suslov? If there had been an independent press, then [Grigori] Medvedev, the chief engineer who ten years ago wrote that you shouldn't build a nuclear reactor near Kiev and described the catastrophe. . . . But they didn't let him have his say, they shut him up.[3] And discussion was necessary.

The opponents of *perestroika* are speaking out against a free press. They have a remarkable feel for developments and they are afraid of everything.

—Changes are now taking place from the top down. What do you think of this?

STRELYANYI: Yes, a revolution from above is going on. We have given one comrade the job of preparing materials for the magazine on "Revolutions from Above", from Peter to Stolypin. Gradualism ruins the revolution.

—Isn't that a little extreme?

STRELYANYI: If we do nothing, if we don't make a great leap, then by the end of the 1990s we will have the same kind of devastation that we had after the Civil War. That winter hit the cities and everything became visible, all the holes. A friend of mine, an *Obkom* First Secretary, is building houses in the country outside a city with a million inhabitants. People ask him: "What for?" And he says nothing and smiles. But to me he says: "Will it be this winter? Or the next?" This is the question that torments him at nights. If the city freezes, he will evacuate the people to the countryside.

—Is it true that Zalygin, the Editor of "Novy Mir", spoke in France about the removal of censorship?[4]

STRELYANYI: He anticipated things a bit. It's still there, only there's less of it. Every publishing house has a political editor. They are nice people and sympathise with us; they complain about how hard it is for them. But every single one of them has an enormous book of "what-you-can'ts" from the Council of Ministers, compiled on the basis of recommendations from Ministries and Departments. These use the pretext of "security" to cover up their slackness. For example, Shchelokov, that criminal, got a ban on criticising police officers down to the rank of sergeant put on the list, while the Minister of the fish industry said, "You can't write about fish dying out!" Departmental imperialism: hide problems from the people. This list should be made public and discussed. Grain purchases are a secret! Who from? From America? As if they didn't know how much they sell us? This is not patriotism, this is the desire to avoid the truth.

—If the press starts giving information on the number of casualties in Afghanistan, then the West and the "dushmans" [Soviet term for Afghan resistance-fighters] *will make use of it.*

STRELYANYI: Everybody in the West knows these numbers! They're hiding them from us, not from the *dushmans*. Yes, Marx said that freedom of the press is not only a boon, it is also an inconvenience.[5] Everything must be printed. If the press prints information, and somebody doesn't agree with it, let him go to court, and we will defend our point of view in open court. There will be foam. But there will also be a wave; and we need a wave, even if some foam comes along with it. There'll be costs, you can't avoid them. In every case the question must be put: Whom does silence benefit?

IS THERE *an independent press in Socialist countries? In Hungary, the censorship is not preliminary, but after-the-fact and punitive. But they like our system.*

STRELYANYI: Administrators and bureaucrats are against a free press and for preliminary censorship. They are afraid of freedom, and they have us by the throat. . . .

Take Popkova's article in *Novy Mir* (No. 5, 1987), "*Gde pyshnee pirogi?*" ["Where Are The Pies Bigger?"]. Popkova is an opponent of *perestroika*. She doesn't believe in it and she tries to prove that it's all half-measures—you can't combine Market and Plan—you can't be "a little pregnant". It's either/or. People ask me: Why did you print this material? My friends split up into two camps. Some are ready to kill me; others say, well done. I think this is the way it should be. We need a culture of polemics. In No. 6 there will be a different point of view. . . .

—Will there be works by Solzhenitsyn?

STRELYANYI: If we don't publish Solzhenitsyn in *Novy Mir*, then other magazines will.

—What are you working on now?

---

[2] See "Partiinaya organizatsiya i partiinaya literatura" (November 1905) in V. I. Lenin, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii* (Moscow, 1960), Vol. 12, p. 99-105.

[3] Grigori Medvedev worked for a long time at nuclear power stations. Three short stories by him, presumably based on his experiences, were published in *Neva* (No. 11, 1986, pp. 19-41).

[4] "Sergei Zalygin said . . . that since he became chief editor of *Novy Mir*, questions of publication . . . have been decided by the editorial board, not by other departments. *Glavlit*, which with the support of the Central Committee used to be able to block publication, . . . no longer decides this question. The censorship now examines works only to determine whether they divulge military secrets. . . ." (Zalygin at a meeting with specialists in Russian philology in Paris on 5 March 1987).

[5] "A free press remains good even if it bears bad fruits, for these fruits merely represent deviations from the nature of a free press." Karl Marx, "Debaty shestogo reinskogo landtaga", in Marx/Engels, *Sochineniya* (Moscow, 1955), Vol. 1, p. 58.

PRODUCED 2005 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

STRELYANYI: I want to write about collectivisation and the famine of 1933 in my village [Staraya Ryabina] on the basis of recollections.

—Old Russian cities should be given back their names.

STRELYANYI: Let the people solve this problem themselves. I too find it funny when the telephone operator says "Come in, Brezhnev; here's Ustinov!" [Laughter]

SOME STUDENTS FROM Leningrad also came by recently. Their eyes burning, they shouted about how the hotel [the Hotel Angleterre, where the poet Sergei Esenin committed suicide in 1925] is going to be torn down—how 1,000 students are guarding it day and night! I tell them, "So go there—you're more useful there!" Our aim is to assist the working-out of a contemporary world view through enlightenment and *glasnost*. Our motto is: print what nobody else is printing.

It is impossible to continue living like this. Democracy is needed! A well-known economist sent us a letter: he writes that history will not forgive us if we do not overcome our current condition in a single leap. You can't cross an abyss in two hops. We are standing before an abyss. Lenin made such a leap after Kronstadt, when he introduced NEP [the New Economic Policy]. A revolutionary coup has to be made without looking around, it has to be done the way the Bolsheviks did it then. Gradualism is the greatest danger to *perestroika*. If we do not overcome gradualism, it will bring down both Gorbachov and *perestroika*.

There are a lot of opponents to *perestroika*. Take the article "*Lukavaya tsifra*" ("The Crafty Figure") in *Novy Mir*, No. 2, 1987. We don't give a damn what people think of us for having printed this article. We don't write for the bosses. Seventy years of monstrous eyewash, and it still hasn't been put right. Gorbachov criticised me for this article at a meeting. My friends got worried after this criticism, offered to help me find another job, asked me: "What, haven't they fired you yet?" As you can see, I'm still working, and will publish what I consider to be necessary and important. This is our Russian misfortune—to look up to the bosses, to try to see whether they like it or not, how they'll react to this-or-that. But one high-ranking lady called me after the appearance of "*Lukavaya tsifra*" and asked that the author put together the calculations that enabled him to reach the conclusions he did. The materials were sent higher up. . . .

THE PRESS HAS BEEN dragging itself along for decades, but it still gets respectful treatment, even though everybody knows about the lying. But still they keep on hoping, and the editorial offices are swamped with material. As long as the press is not independent, it's senseless to complain about it. But the press is already doing a lot. At the January Plenum, the opponents of *perestroika*, unable to bring themselves to attack Gorbachov, attacked his pseudonym: "The Press", which now (they say) has abandoned all restraint, paints everything black, and lashes out in all directions.

The press cannot act openly on its own. What's happening now is a result of the attitude of the new leadership. . . .

—What is the social base for "perestroika"?

STRELYANYI: Gorbachov is being slow about expanding the social base for *perestroika*, and this will lead to the defeat of our cause and of Gorbachov himself. It is necessary to take sides openly, from the top to the bottom. The social base of *perestroika* consists of: highly qualified workers; parts of the scientific-technological intelligentsia; parts of the creative humanitarian intelligentsia; and parts of the lower-level Party apparatus and economic managers.

Stuck in Fog

"Bill Wyman was the Stones ace-scorer. His diary-code for a night with a girl was 'stuck in fog.'

This woman writes to say I use dis-interested
When I mean *un*—a sluttish trick of speech;
Dragging my feet in muddy plough detested
Across late August fields I end up on a beach:
The tides are out by now, and acres lie behind
Of rape and pillage; where the curlews screech
Stink-horn and fox-skunk bristle in the wind—
My heart is drab and guilty, out of reach.

It sticks to me, like sea-fret, autumn fly,
And fog-horns off The Deer Park sound like "boring".
Ships don't strand there now—the sea's too high.
So sweeten my imagination, fetch the borage
Good apothecary, for this amatory scoring—
When love is stuck in fog, lust has to forage.

Patrick Garland

PRODUCED 2005 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

John Loveday

A Flame in Fiesole

. . . CHE IL 12 AGUSTO 1944
DIEDERO LA VITA PER SALVARE INNOCENTI OSTAGGI

(From a memorial to three carabinieri)

A mound below a high stone wall;
Three spare-limbed olive trees—though young,
Already gnarled; below the mound,
Another wall, the path on which we stand;
An iron rail; the fall
Of terraces to Florence, pearled
In August haze.
We pause.
A jagged flame is poised in bronze
Among the little olives, stark,
Half-abstract, dominant. It soars
Across our vision, silhouette
Almost, against the sunlit stone,
The sky's blue angularities.
Move round. Sharp sides assume their grey:
Dark forks that frame pale olive-blur,
Parched grass, the tips of cypresses,
Diminishing. Climb to the mound.
Forked grey becomes green patina,
Each leaping shape defined on sky
Or Tuscany. The fourth side shows,
Beyond a group of trees, a road,
The way we came, they would have come,
The executioners.
Today,
A small truck comes, a man in shorts,
Straw hat, two *carabinieri*—boys
Of half his age. They'll help him lay
Fresh turf across the baring mound.
They go, to take off uniform.
He walks about, surveys. I ask
If he speaks English. "*No*", he laughs,
And jabbers on, but tries to cross
The barrier, holds out his hand
Towards the hazy hills, the spread
Of Florence shimmering. . . .
"*Che bella città!*" Understand?
More than he knows. Now we converse
By guesswork, sign, as children do.
I indicate the sculpture's plaque,
The three men's names, the words I drew
Some meaning from last year,
Diedero la vita per
Salvare innocenti ostaggi.
I raise an unseen rifle, aim,
But he corrects me, rakes the wall
With sharp dry-throated broken rasps,
Hands grasped on shuddering phantom steel,
Close to his belly, arcing round,
Abruptly done. "*Dodici Agusto . . .*
Domani . . . anniversario. . . ."
Tomorrow they will come . . . "*polizia . . .*
Armi . . . il Generale . . ."—all.
I see them moving through the trees
And gathering. His hands spread turf
In gesture, as the boys return
In shorts and track-shoes, golden-skinned.
They pass the rolled turf up to him.
He spreads, along the mound's edge, quick
And competent—a gardener by trade?
The *communale* handyman?
The *cimitero* keeper? Graves
Would have made him humorous. His laugh
And jabber set the tone, belie
The sadness that inheres; the sun
Also—it would have dazzled them,
Scorched this high wall, burned on the gun,
Blotched sweat on backs of uniforms. . . .
Lightly, a woman calls
Some comment down. The man responds,
Their interchange is jocular—
It could be coarse. More women come
Beside her as she talks, look down.
Working, he straddles wide, his balls
Are classic Florentine. I snap
Him from below, behind—the turn
To take a turf, the bend to spread,
The lithe boys reaching up, the flame
Reared overhead. The past stands off,
Grey-clad among the trees,
Its motorcycles throb unheard,
Its helmets, side-cars, guns unseen.
The grass, green memory, ascends.
Across the rail a young man's name,
A girl's, are scrawled in fibre-tip,
A happy, boastful verb between.

PRODUCED 2005 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

DISCUSSION

Educational Disorientations

An American Report-Card

By Herbert London

I SHOULD LIKE to comment on the contradictions that Geoffrey Partington ("The Disorientation of Western Education", ENCOUNTER, January 1987) analyses, in the transatlantic context of US educational debate.

For the past two decades American education has experienced more innovation and reform in its educational practices than in the preceding 200 years. However, now that the dust has settled sufficiently to examine the major reforms in this recent period, not one can be considered a success—and those whose presence is still retained in the schools are decidedly on the defensive. Former reformers now refer to the need for "consolidation", and one of the period's most highly regarded theorists, Neil Postman, has changed his prescription from "*teaching as a subversive activity*" to "*teaching as a conserving activity*".

Although this shift in educational emphasis has been well advertised and noted in many journals in recent years, an examination of each of the major reforms has not, alas, been conducted. I identify here merely those educational reforms that have engendered the most attention in articles and books. A simple head-count in the educational literature from 1963 to 1983 determined the selections.

Starting in the mid-1960s, there appear in the educational literature justifications for "non-graded" classes and the "pass-fail" option for both high-school and college students in the US. Arguments for the introduction of these reforms relied on two assumptions. Since many of the courses introduced into the high-school curriculum during this period were unconventional, it was held that the traditional method of evaluation was inappropriate. One author argued that in a course like film-making, "where process is as crucial as product", the standard grading system didn't apply. Some universities recommended that "students can better understand what they are learning from activities through a process of formal self-evaluation". Another rationale for non-graded or pass-fail courses was the widely embraced belief that the reform would encourage students to explore areas of interest which they might otherwise feel compelled to ignore because of the fear of poor grades.[1]

These two assumptions have proven to be largely fallacious. In the first instance, self-evaluation—even when it was called "formal"—was employed to justify a dubious practice. It might well be asked why film-making should be a course for credit at high-schools and colleges. The skills involved in making a film are not those traditionally associated with the liberal arts; they are related to a "vocation" for which universities, prior to the 1960s, had specifically not given credit. It is also difficult to affirm that self-evaluation can be taken seriously when it is whatever you want it to be; clearly it is without objective value.

Although many factors within the *Zeitgeist* contributed to the "reform", the popular psychology of "*You're okay—I'm okay*" certainly had something to do with its introduction. Fear of grading was predicated for a time on the belief that it was a discriminatory form of "social selection" which allowed some to succeed and others to fail. Clearly that is true; but the procedure is not as arbitrary as the critics suggested. Moreover, the idea of undifferentiated grading made it impossible to determine who was in fact learning and who was not.

There is obviously a distinction between "pass/fail" and "self-evaluation", but in practice this was a distinction without a difference. Since the pass is a "soft" grade attained by almost every student, the standard for satisfactory achievement of requirements became obscure. How could one possibly distinguish between those students who did the minimum amount of work and those who truly excelled? It is instructive that several institutions that installed the "pass/fail" grading arrangement soon added "pass *plus*" and "pass *minus*" grades—a rather absurd if none the less positive first step in the return to realistic evaluation.

THE ARGUMENT that students would explore wide areas of study—which they might not have considered under the pressures of "a grade" looming in the background—did not pass muster. Without such pressure students were tempted to do as little as possible in these exploratory courses. While there was an incentive to take "hard courses", there was no corresponding exogenous influence to have students *learn*. Many of the academic faculties that introduced this reform argued that student behaviour would change in a desirable way if, instead of the extrinsic motivation of grades, there

HERBERT LONDON *is Dean of the Gallatin Division at New York University, and a Senior Fellow of the Hudson Institute. He is the author of numerous articles and books in the field of American education, including "Why Are They Lying to Our Children" (Stein & Day, 1984).*

[1] Philip DeStefano, "Can Traditional Grading Survive the Elective Program?" *English Journal* (March, 1975), p. 58-59. Recommendation from University Senate of Illinois, confirmed by the Board of Trustees, 26 July 1967; Faculty recommendation, Yale University, Approved a Report of Standing Committee on Course of Study, 2 November 1967.

PRODUCED 2005 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

were intrinsic motivation to learn course content. There was, however, not a shred of evidence to substantiate this claim.

Desire for the reform of mathematics teaching began in 1957 when the Soviets launched *Sputnik* into orbit. It was believed, however erroneously, that American students were falling behind the Russians in this discipline because teaching was unimaginative, and the methods outdated. This position was stated most clearly by the Cambridge Conference on School Mathematics held in 1963. At this meeting (organised for the purpose of exploring curriculum reforms and setting goals for the teaching of mathematics in elementary and secondary schools), the participants concluded that:

> "the traditional drill-for-drill's sake should be abandoned and that manipulative skills should be taught instead by the adroit introduction of problems whose primary purpose would be to illustrate mathematical concepts."

Soon afterward "New Math" was spawned as the antidote to what ailed mathematics education. One of its ardent promoters wrote:

> "I see it as having unlimited potential for the improvement of instruction in school mathematics."[2]

As early as 1964, Max Beberman (one of the principal proponents of the New Math, had said:

> "We're in danger of raising a generation of kids who can't do computational arithmetic."

NONE THE LESS, the New Math reforms continued for another ten years. It wasn't until the publication of Morris Kline's *Why Johnny Can't Add* that the reasons for the dismal failure of this pedagogical approach became clear. As Kline explained, the New Math was extrapolated from the deductive reasoning used by mathematicians. But this approach to reasoning, with its accompanying axiomatics, was not intended as an aid to pedagogy. It is hardly surprising, therefore, that the effect was "to bewilder and baffle rather than to aid students". In summary, Kline wrote, "If mathematical education of the traditional type has suffered from martinets who imposed rote learning, the newer education will suffer more horribly from the rigor mongers. . . ."[3]

ONE REFORM introduced during the 1960s has shown remarkable resiliency (even though the argument for its introduction has been demonstrated to be dubious at best). "Bilingualism" or "bicultural education" continues as an American educational practice because it has a powerful political constituency in the large and growing US Hispanic community. Dr Diego Castellanos, one of the leading advocates of this reform, characterised it as "an ideological, sociological, economic and political strategy as much as a pedagogical approach".[4]

Bilingualism is based on the belief that if students are permitted to speak their native language in schools this will ease their transition to English. The practice is certainly not new; there are examples of it in the mid-19th century. What is new is the number of Hispanic children being schooled this way, and the political beliefs that have been attached to the educational reform. To the extent that "bilingual programmes" maintain communication in Spanish, they inhibit the process of assimilation. As long as this immigrant underclass is distinguished from the larger society, its members tend to remain poor. The demand for Spanish in the schools is an obvious attempt to transform a handicap into an asset by suggesting that retention of a foreign tongue will instil pride and somehow mitigate the difficulties of adjusting to a new culture.

The pedagogy of bilingualism, however, remains an enigma. The only definition on which the language profession can agree is that it is "an enrichment programme". But enrichment for what? If the purpose is to promote "separatism" wittingly or unwittingly, it is a deterrent to the assimilation which US schools have traditionally encouraged. Advocates of the programme sometimes disavow the separatist aim, but the evidence suggests that by allowing youngsters to retain Spanish as their first language they are often prevented from securing jobs and are forced to rely on a "ghetto culture" where English-language skill is often shunned.

THE EDUCATIONAL response to the intractable problem of teaching the "Slum Child" was the "open classroom" reform. For a period of ten years A. S. Neill's Summerhill innovations became the American model for elementary education. As one educator put it, the Open Classroom was the educational equivalent of "the liberation movement". The pedagogy was based on the immediate interests of the child—whatever children wanted, they got. As one might suspect, what children want is not necessarily what children need; but the philosophy behind the "Open Classroom" is that children learn even basic skills such as reading at their own pace, "when they are ready", and not according to some teacher-directed sequence.[5]

After more than a decade it is quite apparent that the Summerhill institution, earmarked for ostensibly middle-class English school-children, had little application to our "ghetto

---

[2] Goals for School Mathematics, *The Report of the Cambridge Conference on School Mathematics* (Houghton Mifflin, 1963). L. Edwin Hirsch, *The Arithmetic Teacher*, March 1977.

[3] Max Beberman, quoted in Frank Armbruster, "Our Children's Crippled Future", *How American Education Has Failed* (New York Times Book Co., 1977), p. 103. Morris Kline, *Why Johnny Can't Add: The Failure of the New Math* (St Martin's Press, 1973), pp. 58-59.

[4] Diego Castellanos, quoted in Fred G. Burke, "Bilingual/Bicultural Education In the United States", *The Annals* (America As A Multi-Cultural Society, 1981).

[5] James A. Alatis, Kristie Twaddell (eds.), *English As A Second Language In Bilingual Education* (Teacher of English to Speakers of Other Languages, 1976), p. 317. Earl Ogletree, "The Open Classroom: Does It Work?", *Education*, October, 1972, p. 66. Henry Resnik, "The Open Classroom", *Today's Education*, December 1971, p. 17.

PRODUCED 2005 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

kids". Very few children have the experience or knowledge to judge what should be learned, or have the patience to pursue a learning objective. If they did, teachers, schools, books would be unnecessary. While each child is different, most children's interests vary from hour to hour. The learning of basic skills, however, entails work habits, and a sequence of learning. In most fields, learning emerges from discipline, not from openness.

EVEN THE CORNERSTONE of education—reading—suffered disastrously under the yoke of reform in the 1960s. The reformers offered two general recommendations: one dealt with the pedagogy of reading, the second with politics. In the case of pedagogy the argument was made that students would learn to read readily if *sight* were emphasised instead of *phonics*. It was alleged that the word itself could be made to be recognisable and associated with a picture—instead of having students rely on sounds that are abstract and subject to numerous exceptions (e.g., a youngster using the phonetic approach would not apply an "sh" sound to "sugar"[6]). The problem with that reform was that with *sight recognition* each word has to be learned; one doesn't "sound out" new words, since that isn't the accepted practice. A standard guidepost (however flawed by spelling exceptions) had been replaced by no signpost at all.

The second issue raised by the reformers, largely as an impetus to encourage reading, was that that skill was somehow related to "power". Literacy does indeed invite new options and opportunities. In a way it also overcomes "powerlessness". But how does one assemble a bicycle if the assembly directions can't be read? The answer is either "one learns from experience" or "one learns to read".

This reform had other implications. The point driven home by the reformers was that "political consciousness" can be an incentive for learning to read. One educator, expressing this view, wrote:

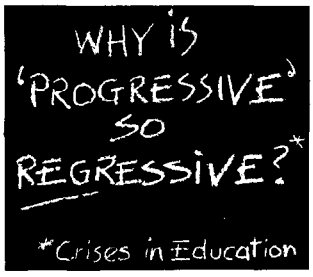
> "We know [the student] has the sense of incompleteness that will impel her on, and we know no measurement scale can grasp that either."

The word "incompleteness" is revealing. Presumably if one grasps a political agenda involving race, ethnicity, or gender there will necessarily be a burning desire to read.

It is a view, however, that flies in the face of common sense. Young pupils are generally not aware of "incompleteness": they read because they are told to do so. The belief that political inspiration will strike like a lightning-bolt suggests more about reformers than about their young charges. In the case of reading (like all other skills), the more one does, the better one gets at it. When youngsters are obliged to read, their skill improves . . . whether what they read deals with radical political change or maintenance of the status quo.[7]

THE "NEW SOCIAL STUDIES" is like the New Math or the New Reading in its adoption of an entirely revised view of appropriate pedagogical approaches. Edwin Fenton, father of this movement in the US, contended that students could learn to develop thinking skills if they mastered the tools of investigation, e.g. organisation, formulation of hypotheses, data collection, and evaluation methods. The basis for teaching the social studies became heuristic.[8] Students were encouraged to learn history by becoming amateur historians. Techniques and "basic concepts" were to be emphasised—the specific content was de-emphasised. Some in this movement would decry my characterisation—but in equating attitudes and inquiry-skills with knowledge,

Full Stops & Capital Letters



THE HMI *(Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Schools) has bitter experience of the controversy that setting targets provokes. Two years ago in a document entitled "English from 5 to 16" they set out suggested objectives for pupils at 7, 11 and 16.*

At 7, for example, they said children should be able to write legibly about personal experiences in prose and poetry, or simple stories of reasonable coherence, using full stops and capital letters appropriately. They said they should know the alphabet and be able to consult simple dictionaries, and have sufficient fluency and motivation to become engrossed in books. They should also be able to listen to simple instructions and carry them out accurately, speak sufficiently clearly and audibly to be understood and converse confidently in social situations.

BUT IT WAS WHAT **the Inspectors said 11-year-olds should know about language that really brought the roof down.**

They said they should know the rules of spelling, the difference between vowels and consonants, the functions and names of the main parts of speech, be able to identify subject and object and be aware of differences between tenses.

The protests, mainly from teachers, were intense. 70% of the 900 detailed responses to the document were hostile.

Eric Bolton (the current Chief Inspector) says:

> *"The response to our document shows that we now have a highly educated generation in England, whether they be teachers or not, who actually know virtually nothing about how our language works. It has almost dropped out of our education process. It really can't be right to have a society that is incapable of being reflective about how language can move you to laughter or tears or move crowds of people to do things that as individuals they would never do."*

John Clare
in THE TIMES *(London)*

[6] Vincent Rogers, "What Research Tells Us About The Three R's", *Phi Delta Kappan*, December 1982, p. 236.

[7] Maxine Greene, "Literacy For What?", *Phi Delta Kappan*, January 1982, p. 329. Ann Bussis, "Burn It At The Casket", *Phi Delta Kappan*, December 1982, p. 241.

[8] Edwin Fenton, *The New Social Studies* (Holt, Rinehart & Winston, 1967), ch. 1.

PRODUCED 2005 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

this reform in the end diminished the importance of attending to the hard facts.

Another condition that altered the character of social studies was the belief that pluralism in society should be reflected by pluralism-in-the-curriculum. "Ethnic studies . . . social realities . . . current issues . . . problem-solving techniques" replaced the traditional disciplines of geography, history, and civics.[9]

Emphasis on "inquiry skills" is almost meaningless if a student doesn't know whether the French Revolution came before or after the American Revolution. Moreover, the "problem-solving" approach requires wide background and detailed context—and where was this to come from? Reform led to the removal of traditional disciplines from the curriculum, and left students in the position of making judgments about policy without the benefit of knowledge. One "exercise" in a social-studies teacher guidebook suggests that one student should argue for a national policy on oil use, and another against it. This exercise attempts to promote debate, but ignores the prerequisites: i.e. history, trade-offs, national interest, market mechanisms, the inter relationship of issues, supply and demand. Although this was not the intention of the educational reformers, such exercises promote a rhetorical relativism and an excited exchange of ignorant opinion.

Without underestimating student abilities, it seems logical to argue that knowledge is a building-block for inquiry, not the reverse. One must at least know a little before research begins. An hypothesis doesn't emerge from intrinsic curiosity. In a recent test given to 1,875 North Carolina college students, only a third could locate the Seine on a map of Europe. When freshmen were tested at St Mary-of-the-Woods College in Indiana, 95% could not locate Viet Nam. Of the twelve-year-olds attending schools in North Dallas, 20% misidentified Brazil as the United States on a map of the world.[10] This is hardly surprising. That hybrid discipline called "social studies" has undermined traditional areas of study, and encouraged "inquiry" as an end-in-itself.

THE EDUCATIONAL REFORMS which began in the 1960s reflect a great deal about the "exciting time of experimentation" in which they were introduced.

In several cases they were inspired by a justifiable concern for improved student performance; in others by a political agenda that had very little to do with education. The issue, as I see it, is that a generation was "trained in incapacity" (to borrow Thorstein Veblen's phrase). If any sensible lessons emerge for a new era of educational reform, a careful review of the last reform period in the 1960s is needed. Should this occur, I am confident it will suggest wariness about the lure of "innovation" and reinforce a crying need for commonsensical guidance. I am convinced that a new era of reform can only improve on past performance. You can't get lower than "Fail".

[9] William W. Crowder, "Trends and Developments In Elementary Social Studies", *Education*, Summer 1979.

[10] Lucia Solorzano, "Why Johnny Can't Read Maps, Either", *U.S. News and World Report*, 25 March 1985, p. 50.

AUTHORS

Richard Deveson was until 1984 an editor of arts courses for the Open University; he is now a freelance writer and translator. He has recently completed a collection of short stories, and is now working on a novel.

Roger Owen, who worked for the BBC from 1960-1985 as a radio and later a television producer, now lives in Jerusalem where he is to join a new English-language newspaper, *The Nation*, as a feature writer.

Renee Winegarten is the author of *Writers and Revolution* (Croom Helm, 1974), *The Double Life of George Sand* (Basic Books, 1980), and *Mme de Stael* (Berg Publishers, 1985). Her contributions to ENCOUNTER include "The Reputation of George Sand" (January 1977), "In Quest of Lamartine" (August 1982), and "Stendhal: The Enigmatic Liberal" (September-October 1985).

Max Beloff, Gladstone Professor of Government and Public Administration, University of Oxford, from 1957-74, and Principal of the University College at Buckingham, 1974-79, was created a life peer in 1981. His most recent books are *Wars and Welfare, Britain 1914-15* (Edward Arnold, 1984) and, as co-author, *The Government of the United Kingdom* (Weidenfeld, 1985).

John Aiken is an industrial chemist and patents consultant, now semi-retired. He has written fiction—including the novels *Nightly Deadshade* (Macmillan), *World Well Lost* (Doubleday) and *The Lid Off* (Robert Hale)—criticism, and light verse. He is at present collaborating with his photographer wife in a book on wildflowers in their natural habitat.

Walter Haubrich lives in Spain, and writes for the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* on Iberian and Latin-American affairs.

Jean-François Revel writes a regular column for *Le Point* in Paris. *How Democracies Perish*, his most recently translated work, is published by Weidenfeld (London) and Doubleday (New York).

Sue Vice is completing her doctoral thesis on Malcolm Lowry at New College, Oxford, while working for the publishers Basil Blackwell. She spent January 1986 at the Special Collections Division of the Library of the University of British Columbia, studying—from among the vast quantity of Lowry's personal effects and paperware gathered there—the manuscripts and drafts of *Under the Volcano* and *La Mordida*. She is currently editing a collection of essays to commemorate, in 1989, the 80th anniversary of Lowry's birth.

Alan Ryan, Reader in Politics, University of Oxford, and a Fellow of New College, moves in January to the United States to take up a chair as Professor of Politics at Princeton University. His latest book, *Russell: A Political Life*, will be published this autumn by Allen Lane.

Kate Duchêne studied modern languages at Trinity College, Cambridge. She is now an actor and a freelance writer.

John Loveday's latest book of poems is *Particular Sunlights* (Headland Poetry, 1986).

S. Gorley Putt is a Fellow of Christ's College, Cambridge, and former Chairman of the English Association. His book *The Golden Age of English Drama: Enjoyment of Elizabethan Plays* was published in 1981 by D. S. Brewer; his most recent work is *A Preface to Henry James* (Longman, 1986).

PRODUCED 2005 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

MEMOIR

Charles Allberry & Roy Calvert

By S. Gorley Putt

SOME FORTY YEARS after the times of which I now write, when preparing to interview candidates for admission to Christ's College, I would sometimes come across in a headmaster's report the words "I fear that you may find him rather shy." At this point I always put a large plus sign in the margin. Shyness is an attractive quality in itself. It is a positive virtue in a freshman poised on the brink of important mental, physical and emotional discoveries. It breeds that sense of healthy wonder which is the best frame of mind in which to address those discoveries. If I later thought shyness a prime merit in freshmen, it was doubtless because I myself had arrived in October 1930 with a prodigious stock of it.

Before the first week had ended, I had committed an act of greenest gaucherie which helped, I believe, to attract first the notice and then the friendship of the most remarkable young man of my year. Among the host of invitations which perplex every freshman, there had shone down at me from over the Ferry Path fireplace a card announcing that Sir Kynaston Studd, Bart., a former Lord Mayor of London, would preside at Guildhall over a meeting of the Cambridge Inter-Collegiate Christian Union. The card indicated "morning dress". Having failed to translate this into "not evening dress", I had sped to acquire morning dress, but the Montague Burton salesman must have thought that the timid schoolboy had asked for "*mourning* dress", for he fitted me out in the blackest coal-black suit I ever saw until I came to don my "Number One" doeskin garb of a Sub-Lieutenant RNVR. In naval uniform without the buttons I must have looked sombre even in a crowded CICCU audience. I cannot recall the ex-Lord-Mayor or the Inter-Collegiate brand of 1930 evangelism. What I do recall is that another young Christ's freshman had come over to sit beside me. We started chattering and kept it up, off and on, for the next four years. His name was Charles Allberry. Forty years after Charles's death, a young actor named Nigel Havers brought a version of him into English homes via the television series based on C. P. Snow's *Strangers and Brothers* sequence of novels, in which Snow had tried to capture something of Charles in his fictional character Roy Calvert.

Because Charles's brilliant life was doomed to be such a short one, my first impressions of him were pretty well unchanged during our four shared years at Christ's and the pitifully few years thereafter. During my two following years at Yale, Charles was either in Germany or pursuing research in Cambridge. During the anxious prelude to the Second German War, Charles was a Fellow of the College while I was producing Talks for the BBC. When the War came, he joined the RAF and I the Royal Navy. It was during that later period, when we seldom met for long, that the qualities his Cambridge friends had so cherished became exposed to a larger but (as recent evidence shows) an equally admiring world. But it was not until the publication of Snow's novel *The Light and the Dark* in 1947, four years after Charles's death, that the "Roy Calvert" version of Charles Allberry became, so to say, a public figure. His friends' reactions to Snow's fictional representation varied from a sympathetic acclaim for an effort to keep something of our young hero alive in memory, to a hostility for what some considered a melodramatic travesty which they spurned in quite unprintable language. Either way, Charles was no longer the unexplainable personal heritage of a lucky but very small group whose lives he had touched and enriched. As Charles's

THE TELEVISION SERIAL *based on C. P. Snow's sequence of novels "Strangers and Brothers" revived a controversy sparked off in academic circles when Snow's novel "The Light and the Dark" was published in 1947. The portrait of its young hero, Roy Calvert, was based on Snow's friendship with the brilliant young classical and oriental scholar Charles Allberry (1911-43) whose meteoric academic career had been cut short by his death while serving with the RAF. His mastery of such languages as Syriac, Coptic and Soghdian had already won him international fame in his esoteric field. His edition of "A Manichaean Psalm-Book", in the words of one authority, established him "as an orientalist of the first rank". But it was as a person, rather than as a scholar, that Allberry had been acclaimed by his contemporaries and elders. His charisma (to use a term which would have called forth his gleeful scorn) has been long remembered not only by Lord Snow but also by such surviving colleagues as Sir John Plumb and Sir Harry Hinsley. Of the young man described by a German orientalist as "one of the best and most promising representatives of British learning", Snow himself had written, "He was the most gifted and the most remarkable of all of us, and the most unhappy". Those last four words were one novelist's estimate. How true were they?*

PRODUCED 2005 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

widow (now Mrs Cyril Lewis) explains in her preface to *Charles Allberry: A Portrait*, privately published in 1984, it was after their son David had reread *The Light and the Dark* that he asked: "Was my father really like that?" Sir John Plumb helped to answer the question by suggesting that a character in Somerset Maugham's *The Razor's Edge* had also contributed to Snow's portrait of the fictional Roy Calvert. The television version of the whole of Snow's novel sequence *Strangers and Brothers*, by a sheer fluke of casting, at least helped to remind some survivors, via the acting of Nigel Havers, of Charles's physical appearance. Reminded us, too, that when we heard in 1943 that he had perished when his plane was shot down over Essen, we could not help wondering, whoever or wherever we were, why the rest of us, with varying fractions only of his unmatched vitality, were still alive.

For it was that vitality, beyond all his other qualities, that had made him a legend in his own young lifetime. One hankers after semi-legendary figures—Alcibiades, perhaps, or Sir Thomas Urquhart's Admirable Crichton—in any effort to describe him. At the very least he had been, as Charles Whibley wrote of Crichton,[1] "an undergraduate raised to the highest power". Other phrases by Whibley seem singularly well fitted to apply to our friend. Like Crichton, "He had a talent for attracting the eyes of others to him, and thus he achieved a result which, but for him, might have seemed impossible: he made pedantry romantic." Charles's gleeful exercises in Coptic or Soghdian were of this kind. It is Whibley, too, still speaking of the Admirable Crichton, who adds: "fate in its kindly wisdom spared us the shame and regret of looking upon a Phoenix of middle age". I should like to say to David Allberry (unknown to me): "*That* is what your father was like."

LIKE THE UNKNOWN DAVID, I too had been rereading *The Light and the Dark*. The recognisably biographical parts of this novel cover the years when I was absent in America, and depict a Charles I did not personally know. That so vivid a personality should have changed markedly within two years seems unlikely. Far more likely that Snow's Charles had always been a different person from mine, and that Snow's Roy Calvert was one stage again removed from *his* Charles. We are all very different people to our different friends: sometimes we switch automatically into the role a particular friend is thought to expect from us; more often we are likely to be unaware of what very different figures we may cut in the estimation of our friends—let alone our enemies. I find this easy to acknowledge when I think of Snow himself. Charles and I both came to know him well during those four Cambridge years. For the rest of Snow's lifetime (and he reached the age of 75) I went on seeing him as the Snow I knew in the early 1930s. I could well understand that those who first met him during, say, his brief spell treading the corridors of power in a Wilson administration, met an entirely different person. In Charles Allberry's case, to repeat the Whibley image, our Phoenix could not change.

I could not myself accept the consoling aspect of the Phoenix image. Those whom the gods love die young? Maybe. Small comfort to us ungodlike mortals. Even the cult of euthenasia for other people's senile decay seems to me at one remove from reality. We are likely to wish to put them out of *our* misery, rather than their own. Wishing the young out of their probable decline from brilliance to soundness, from power to influence, from ambition to contentedness, from love to affection, seems a pretty smug conclusion from those who enjoy, or at least endure, those later secondary qualities.

THAT SUCH A NOTION could even be contemplated by the friends of Snow's Calvert character in the novel shows how far removed he was from "my" version of Charles Allberry.

Snow's version is shown plunged for periods at a time into deep black melancholy, which in the novel is demonstrated with a fascinated loving horror by the Lewis Eliot narrator as a desperately lonely search for the God in whom Roy Calvert could not believe. "My" Charles was an impish, at times almost diabolic mystic. Snow himself was capable of feeling and describing melancholia; his dearest friends would hardly have thought Snow within reach of a comprehension of mysticism. This does not prove that Charles Allberry *was* a mystic, of course. And if he was, I am no more capable than Snow of penetrating and describing such a temperament. But it does leave the possibility that the hysterical component in the universally recognised attractiveness of Allberry's temperament could have been something quite other than a broody kind of cosmic depression that Snow himself could experience, and that Winston Churchill—another sufferer—called attacks of "Black Dog". I myself never saw those moods in Charles. If I *had* seen them, I should have attributed them to a certain kind of tragicomic sense of the farcical which I take to be an essential ingredient of saintliness. The "Black Dog" side of Roy Calvert causes his author to think that his wartime willingness to share the widespread risks of death was somehow a deliberate willing of himself towards the likeliest chance of solving the insoluble problem of his religious longings and doubts. The Charles Allberry I knew at Cambridge (and hardly at all thereafter) had a more glittering temperament. If he was top-heavy, it was with the consquences of his own brilliance. He could scream with tragic laughing irony at the pretences and self-protections wrapped around themselves by men with very much thicker skins than his own. It was his own complete vulnerability that drove him to his feats of exact scholarship, to his automatic "rightness" of response to different social or personal situations in which preconceived theories of any kind would have been quite useless—and chiefly to that reckless, crazily joyous dare-devilry which might fill his more prudent friends with awe, but which at the same time brought for us the sudden illumination that the bravery of a practising mystic can be dare-angelic, too.

[1] Charles Whibley, *Essays in Biography* (1913).

PRODUCED 2005 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

In the portrait of Snow by his brother Philip (*Stranger and Brother*, 1982) there is printed an enormously long letter in which the creator of Roy Calvert wrote of Charles Allberry's death in April 1943: "His loss is harder to bear than that of any of my other friends would be. I learned from him more of the adventures and solitariness of the spirit than from anyone else; in some ways he was the most gifted and the most remarkable of all of us, and the most unhappy." To that straightforward tribute all the friends of Charles could assent, save for those last four words. That final phrase came from a man who had known Charles longer and more regularly than I did; I can but accept it as a genuine statement, if only because so many of Snow's other comments on Allberry straight or Allberry Calvertised squared with my own personal knowledge. "In nearly all those affections he gave himself without thinking twice, though his mocking mimic's interest went along with his love." There, Roy Calvert *is* Charles Allberry. So, too, in the phrase: "as a scholar his gifts were, as the mathematicians say, deep, sharp, and narrow; this kind of broad commentary was not at all in his line." But when one came to read that Roy Calvert "was born to struggle, to pursue false hopes, to know despair—to know what, for one of his nature, was an intolerable despair"—why, *then* one could only say "That may be Roy; but, thank heaven, I never spotted it in Charles." Even so, when Snow the novelist came to generalise about his creation Roy Calvert towards the end of his tragic novel, the conclusion he draws is so consistent with his known interest in and affection for his friend Charles Allberry, that one could only concede "*Perhaps*, after all, he saw something the rest of us missed?" The following short passage is of this type:

> "The essence of our nature lay within us, untouchable by our own hands or any other's, by any chance of things or persons, from the cradle to the grave. But what it drove us to in action, the actual events of our lives—those were affected by a million things, by sheer chance, by the interaction of others, by the choice of our own will. So between essence and chance and will, Roy had, like the rest of us, had to live his life.
>
> It was the interplay of those three that had brought him to that moment in my room, smiling, talking of his 'bad end.' They had brought him to his present situation. I felt the delight of our intimacy—and from his situation I shrank back in anguish and appalled."

I think it probable that the violence with which some of Snow's colleagues (in particular, some Fellows of Christ's College) repudiated the notion of Calvert as in any way a portrait of Allberry, stemmed from two aspects of the fictional character who in physical portraiture so closely resembled their friend. The first was the suggestion that when he (like Allberry) joined the RAF, he was deliberately seeking his own death. In this, I feel, they were more in tune not only with the Allberry they knew, but also with the spirit of those dreadful days. If in normal peaceful times a man insists on taking deliberate risks of the "Russian roulette" type, then thoughts like "the death wish" may indeed enter one's head. But what Snow's novel strikingly enough does *not* stress is that it was perfectly normal, and natural, and indeed expected, that a healthy young man should join one of the fighting services in November 1940. Whatever may have been the lot of Calvert's contemporaries in *The Light and the Dark*, it was certainly true that most of Allberry's friends and contemporaries were in the forces—or, if not, they would hardly have attributed suicidal impulses to the thousands who were. A *readiness* to die, at such a time, may be considered as either bravery or resignation, but hardly as automatic suicide.

The second suggestion about Calvert which aroused resentment was his pre-War predilection for much of what he had seen at first hand in Nazi Germany; and here, too, the critics of the novel were at least in tune with the spirit of the time. In spite of his youth, Allberry had already won a European reputation among Orientalists, and his work on *A Manichaean Psalm-Book* (usefully summarised in a section of his widow's *Portrait*) and other esoteric researches, naturally led him to Germany to study source-material and collaborate with German experts in his highly specialised field. Calvert, too, is sent to Germany, where he is visited by the Snow-like narrator of the novel, Lewis Eliot. In Berlin, Roy Calvert acts as an enthusiastic guide: "Don't you feel that it has great power?" Eliot concludes: "I knew for sure what I had already suspected: he had brought me to Berlin to convert me." They argue and quarrel:

> "He had set out to convince me that the Nazis had history on their side.
>
> The future could be in German hands. There would be great suffering on the way, they might end in a society as dreadful as the worst of this present one: but there was a chance—perhaps a better chance than any other—that in time, perhaps in our lifetime, they would create a brilliant civilisation.
>
> 'If they succeed', said Roy, 'everyone will forget the black spots. In history success is the only virtue.'"

The plot of *The Light and the Dark* allows the theme of Calvert's flirtation with Nazi officials to wander into various melodramatic situations. Here, there is no offence: the episodes are very clearly fictitious scenes in a novel, and any intelligent reader must have spotted them as such. But when Calvert's own personal yearning for an external authority over and beyond himself is identified with a capitulation to Nazi doctrine, then indeed it is hardly surprising that those readers of the novel who could appreciate how closely the professional academic careers and hopes of Calvert and Allberry coincided, were outraged. It should not be forgotten that although these Berlin passages relate to the time just before the War, the novel itself was published in 1947, after a war in which millions (including Charles himself) had perished.

Before resuming my own story, in which Charles played a vivid if truncated role, I will cull a few comments on this "Nazi" business from the *Portrait* assembled by his widow, Mrs Lewis, in 1984. They remind one of the difference between fiction and fact, however closely a fictional figure

PRODUCED 2005 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

may resemble a real person in some aspects. I do this in fairness not only to Charles Allberry but also to my other friend, Charles Snow the novelist (*not*, remember, "the biographer"). Mrs Lewis herself recalls that Charles did "admire the German people, especially their industry and enthusiasm, the cleanliness of their towns, their music and poetry"; but "he detested their treatment of the Jews and other dissidents and the disservice they were rendering to universal scholarship". A Cambridge colleague, Christopher Morris of King's College, reports that, "As to his alleged flirtations with Fascism, I think Snow didn't allow for Charles' habit of teasing—or leg-pulling. Snow hadn't nearly so much sense of humour as Charles, and certainly a less impish one. I think the so-called 'Fascism' was really a 'tease'." Sir John Plumb puts the whole inflated theme into proper perspective:

> "With hindsight, I think that one can see that Charles was searching for a system of belief, a pattern of personal living to which he could totally commit himself: the discipline of the Nazis attracted him and perhaps even its faith; the Roman Catholic Church, in the end, reached deeper into him when he committed himself to it. By the end of 1941, certainly, the search was over both personally and ideologically. He knew he was a great scholar, he had found God and a Church, a wife to love and a cause to commit himself to. I believe that the last year of Charles's life was the happiest he had ever known."

So much for the Allberry/Calvert business. But, jogged on by Sir John Plumb's hint as to the identity of another source of Snow's Roy Calvert, I have also been rereading Somerset Maugham's *The Razor's Edge* to remind myself of the mystical qualities possessed by his young American hero Larry Darrell. It had not been Maugham's first attempt to get to grips with this subject. In *The Summing Up* (1938), that lucid autobiography of his intellectual strivings, written in his sixties when his professional life as playwright and novelist had already scored its main successes, Somerset Maugham disclosed a lifelong fascination with philosophical and spiritual problems. It probably surprised some of his readers and playgoers to come across such a sentence as this in the broodings of a more or less professional cynic: "Mysticism is beyond proof and indeed demands no more than an indwelling conviction." Even more surprising was his claim to have had himself one mystical experience, which he briefly describes. At a time when he thought it likely that his own life might be coming to an end, Maugham (of all people) wrote with straightforward simplicity: "Mystic and sceptic agree in this, that at the end of all our intellectual efforts there remains a great mystery." Maugham was to live on through his Second German War, and it was after that second holocaust that his novel *The Razor's Edge* was published in 1945, two years before *The Light and the Dark*. By that time, for all his celebrated cynicism and a way of life vividly exposed in Graham Sutherland's portrait, he had evidently decided to "have a go" in a more extended fashion at the subject of inherent goodness.

Somerset Maugham's narrator sees much less of his young friend Larry than Snow's Lewis Eliot sees of Roy Calvert. There is even a ten-year gap during which various characteristics half-suspected by the narrator are allowed to blossom and develop in the young hero off-stage, so to say. Taking flight from the comfortable social life which has surrounded him with loving friends who try in various ways to accommodate themselves to his "genius" or "charisma" or whatever label they may find for his solitary unclubbable spirit, Larry wanders off to sample life as a coal-miner, as a persistently speculative drop-out in various Western countries, and eventually at the feet of a Yogi in India. His deliberate detachment, in short, is far more extreme than Roy Calvert's, just as his final act of self-sacrificial indulgence in marrying a debauched nymphomaniac (because he had once thought that he had spotted the purity of innocence in her when she was a young girl) is a far more melodramatic gesture than Roy's marriage to his featureless and (as a makeshift fictional plot-convenience figure) obviously counterfeit Rosalind.

A few almost random quotations will show how closely Maugham's fictitious Larry resembles Snow's fictitious Roy. We have been told of his lithe physical beauty and his surprising physical strength. We know that he is an amazingly clever linguist. We have seen him encouraging a Polish coal-miner, when drunk, to talk about the Dark Night of the Soul and the ecstasy of becoming one with the Beloved. We have heard him explain that what he saw in his Yogi was saintliness and what he gained was Peace. We will later hear him confess: "I happen to think that the greatest ideal man can set before himself is self-perfection."

Larry's ex-fiancée (his Rosalind figure), discussing him with the narrator, asks:

> "'What do you think it can be that makes him so queer?'
> 'Perhaps something so commonplace that one simply doesn't notice it.'
> 'Such as?'
> 'Well, goodness, for instance.'
> Isabel frowned.
> 'I wish you wouldn't say things like that. It gives me a nasty feeling in the pit of my stomach.'
> 'Or is it a little pain in the depth of your heart?'"

In a later conversation, the narrator tries to articulate Larry's mysterious impulses:

> "'I only wanted to suggest to you that self-sacrifice is a passion so overwhelming that beside it even lust and hunger are trifling. It whirls its victim to destruction in the highest affirmation of his personality. The object doesn't matter; it may be worth while or it may be worthless. No wine is so intoxicating, no love so shattering, no vice so compelling. When he sacrifices himself man for a moment is greater than God, for how can God, infinite and omnipotent, sacrifice himself? At best he can only sacrifice his only begotten son.'
> 'Oh, Christ, how you bore me', said Isabel."

And talking with another woman friend of his young hero, the narrator says:

PRODUCED 2005 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"'Well, Larry is, I think, the only person I've ever met who's completely disinterested. It makes his actions seem peculiar. We're not used to persons who do things simply for the love of God whom they don't believe in.'

Suzanne stared at me.

'My poor friend, you've had too much to drink.'"

It would be easy to multiply examples of the likenesses between Snow's Roy Calvert and Maugham's Larry Darrell. The point I have been belabouring can be simply stated. We know that in creating Calvert, Snow had Charles Allberry in mind. I have no idea whether Maugham in creating Darrell had any human model in mind. What I *do* know is that whoever the model might have been, it was certainly not Charles Allberry.

We are left with a curious lesson in the art of fiction. If Snow had never written *The Light and the Dark* and I had happened to pick up *The Razor's Edge*, I should have thought: "How odd—that Larry Darrell character had a lot of Charles Allberry in him." At times the wholly unconnected Larry seems to me rather *more* like Charles than the closely connected Roy, if only because Maugham attempts an admittedly crude version of a mystical temperament, and Snow does not. What Maugham might have made of the real Allberry, one can only guess. One thing at least is certain: a novelist is quite capable of inventing a character closely resembling a person he has never met. In one particular case, indeed, a novelist (Henry James) once invented a character (Roderick Hudson) whom a quarter of a century later he did meet in the flesh (Hendrik Andersen). But that is another story.

IN WRITING about the Charles Allberry I met in Michaelmas Term 1930, I have allowed myself to be drawn into a commentary on the controversial Roy Calvert fictional figure, simply because my personal documentation of one of the most significant friendships of my life is regrettably scanty. I must now try, by means of extracts from those few remaining letters, to add some sidelights.

The first was sent from Tübingen in April 1934, when I was still at Christ's:

". . . I have sent several letters to England and have received no reply to certain of them. This is mildly perturbing, for I think that they must have been in some way intercepted. There was no reason, I may say, why they should have been. They contained no noxious or Marxist matter, and of Hitler and the S.A. I say nothing but good. . . . But I was forgetting—you do not know Germany.

Nor, for that matter, do I. But I am learning. I am progressing daily. I used, when anybody made a remark to me in German, to do nothing by way of reply but either to stare with a look of mixed amazement and halfwitted geniality: or to raise the left eyebrow in my wellknown manner, keeping the lips firmly closed the while. But now the amazement is not so blank, nor the surprise so great; nor, come to that, is the geniality so halfwitted—though, I should add, the left eyebrow continues to do its good work; for I am beginning to be able, it is true with a certain coy diffidence, as though I did not really trust the brain—to be able to understand. My strides, like those of modern science, are considerable. Indeed, if I may not be said, like it, to possess seven league boots, at any rate I am no longer legless. . . .

. . . I have also written to Canon Knox, Warden of the Oratory of the Black Sheep. Lard is good for the digestion."

It contains teasing references to the Nazis, in the same tone of mockery with which he mentions the Cambridge Oratory of the Good Shepherd where he had so many Anglo-Catholic friends, or, in the gnomic utterance about lard, our friend Arthur Peck's translation of some of Aristotle's zoological treatises for the Loeb Library.

The second example, dated November 1934, is from an enormously long screed from Cambridge, sent to me at Yale, evidently in response to an equally long letter in which I must have been rash enough to describe my efforts to figure as a Yale limey:

"What's all this about body-building exercises? I thought you had gone to America to improve the minds of others and, moreover, your own. You make no mention of (a) lecturing (b) your own reading; and as if to conceal that you do neither of these things you quote (c) body-building exercises, as though that were your very 'esse' in America. Describe a normal day; recount the routine, if routine it is, from the hour of your rising until the minute of setting your massive head upon the probably quite inadequate pillow and folding your hands to sleep. I have bought a pillow of my own.

That is what I should like to hear—some long and thorough narrative of what you do; what you think interests me of course, and the state of your soul, and the new gas that arises on your effervescent psyche (I don't use the word gas with any malicious intent)—all these things interest me; but above all and before all I would know what you are doing—how you are spending the time and sweeping magnificently through your waking hours. Waking hours, yes; it is of them that I wish to learn, and what you do with them; day-dreams we shall exclude or talk of later—day-dreams and every fancy in its flight and the whole brood of reveries. Do, do, do—tell me what it is you *do*: all else seems unimportant, lifeless, extinct, like the Dodo. . . .

. . . I will tell you some of the things I do. I have taken a flat in Panton Street, on the second floor of a tall house, of which I am at present the only occupant. I get my own breakfast—for I am not one of your hogbreakfasters, that must have bacon and ham or any form of egg. Be it flat or round I do without. The mornings I spend usually in work—at Syriac or Coptic or teaching at the Leys. For I am doing that, you know—five times a week. There are five boys in the class, all hoping to win scholarships—all, except one, hoping in vain. Then at 1 o'clock I walk, or get onto a bus, to Christ's, and eat luncheon in the hall.

PRODUCED 2005 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

In the afternoon I sometimes play squash racquets and sometimes read in the library. Sometimes I play pingpong. On Mon- Tues- and Fridays I have a supervision in Syriac with the Master from 5 until six. . . . We have an exceedingly good Bachelors table this year—such lights as Johnnie May and Eacott and Bill Dodd and Jackywacky Plumb as well as the old stagers. . . . All these are great in their generation, and my heart and tongue grow warm when I am there among them. But the losses are considerable.

I have seen Wynyard, and Lewis Way too—they both send you their love. Snow I expect you have heard from, and of, a lot. He waxes greater than ever and his genius grows brighter with the days—the least pedestrian of men, an interrestrial being, remote, living, like flaring nebula, in some distant habitation of his own. He is losing weight."

This letter is addressed to "My darlingest Gorley"—an example of Charles's blend of affection and mockery, no doubt in reaction to his severe scholarly writing from which all personal feelings had to be extruded. "Wynyard" was Wynyard Browne, an elegant worldly-wise undergraduate with literary tastes and a number of aristocratic friends, whose play *The Holly and the Ivy* (1950) was to have a considerable success in the London theatre.

Another letter to Yale, in March 1935, again shows his delight in exact detail, precise events, and a pretended disdain for attempts at "creative writing":

"What shall one say? I have owed you a letter for so long. . . . It is strange that this should be, for my affection for you is undiminished, and I have the same lively desire to exchange news with you. But America, like the life hereafter, is so hard to believe in: I have never met anyone who has returned from either, not even my friend Jack Wade. But ghosts sometimes return from the grave, and men from America, even if I find difficulty in believing, and I look forward to seeing you again.

It is Coptic that chiefly engrosses me. I have read, and am reading a great amount of Coptic texts, and I have bought W. E. Crum's new Coptic lexicon; at least, the four parts of it which have yet appeared. The fifth and last should be out next year. . . . Do you know of any Coptic scholars in America? Perhaps you could enquire.

Apart from Coptic, I go on learning Syriac; the Master teaches me three times a week, on Monday, Wednesday and Friday at five. But unlike Coptic I have not really grasped the language, though I am gradually getting a firmer hold on it. Until I have mastered it, my thesis remains in a very rudimentary stage.

Moreover, I teach still at the Leys, and so keep my classics unburnished. . . . But this never takes more than five hours a week all told: I enjoy it very much.

Perhaps two evenings a week see me at parties of various kinds, chiefly in Christ's. On Friday I had lunch with Martin Solomon, who asked after you. Henry FitzGerald has bought a new suit which he admires very much, and does little work. He is a member of the Footlights Drama Club, and has written almost all their next show. He still produces curtains occasionally, and is said (by himself) to be engaged at present on a complete play. I should think that he begins with the final curtain and works backwards. . . . I see little of Snow who is busy as Junior Tutor. . . . Please let me know some of what you do. . . ."

Harry FitzGerald was our young poet, as flamboyant in speech and manner as Charles was precise and ironic; but they had in common the glow of Whibley's Crichton, "an undergraduate raised to the highest power". He, too, died young, and his *Collected Poems* were posthumous.

It would have been fun to hear Charles teasing Harry on his poems. His vivid derision of my own early efforts in prose and verse, sent to him from Yale with no doubt over-enthusiastic accounts of new literary discoveries, called forth such knuckle-rapping remarks as "You appear to have plenty of time on your hands. I deduce this from your writing of poems." My last extract is a pyrotechnic parody by a professional linguist jeering at a young literary historian:

"My brother Edward arrived this morning, and is in good form; and so did your letter, which is not. . . . Your mind, for which I had a great admiration once, is now a poor soiled thing, as though one were to coat coins fresh from the mint with dung. Instead of an instrument of edge and force it has become the receptacle of the droppings of half the second-rate poets of two continents and is only saved by your laziness from the other half."

That last jeering letter reached me from—of all places—the Vatican Library.

THE SHARPNESS OF LOSS afflicting his friends when Charles Allberry's laugh died over Essen was honed by some of the qualities in these few dashed-off letters. His verve had made the rest of us feel cleverly dull; fumblers after half-truths. He had seemed not so much to scorn opinions as to be without the need for them. So early in his life, attitudes and theories seemed to have lost their validity for him. He had such a rightness of response that whether he won Firsts in the Tripos or gained a half-Blue for lacrosse or became a Fellow of the College or tossed over an Intelligence job for active service in the RAF, one felt that in all these actions he was simply picking out right *facts*. He was not misguided by opinions; he followed a whim. Some acquaintances used the word "fey" to describe his superficial impishness. Yet his whimsical sallies were not particularly witty; they were not social enough to be witty. His wild gleeful assaults, his mock quarrels, were acceptable to some people only when they could be muttered about as "charm" or "freshness". Absurd. As well call a comet charming, or reflect on the social originality of a puma. Jerkily graceful in his mental flights, as in his much praised elegance as a batsman, he dodged past opinion and disarmed envy.

The melancholy (or mystical) streak noted in C. P. Snow's Roy Calvert may have developed in the pre-War and early War years when I rarely saw him. All I myself could remember was that behind the calculated effrontery of All-

PRODUCED 2005 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

berry's manner there was a rich *comic* sense based on his love of facts and distrust of expressed opinions. I myself felt refreshed not only when he pierced the balloons of people whose pomposity I could see for myself, but also when he pierced my own balloons. The arrogance he displayed was that of a superior agility which we all had to acknowledge with varying degrees of glumness, and he himself (as on the cricket pitch) with cheerful princely acceptance. Snow, watching him growing up from *enfant terrible* to an ornament of High Table, saw other things; saw the vulnerability of his way of life, disguised as it was by the prodigious energy of his scholarship. That same vulnerability enabled him to attack, with accurate sympathy, the vulnerability of his close friends. For Charles's impact had been the very reverse of sentimental. It was part of his routine, for example, to tease me about my Firsts in the English Tripos, and my literary studies at Yale. He thwacked us all at what we considered to be our strong point. Himself an omnivorous reader, he affected a great scorn for literature. He would send sudden exasperating letters, unrelated to time or place, full of a ferocious banter that would have cut short most other friendships. They were written in that clear handwriting which seemed to cauterise the wounds he dealt and send an echo of Caroline laughter pealing even from the unopened envelope.

All this helps to explain why, whether we valued him for his satire or for his self-criticism, there was for us all a feeling not so much of regret that a predictable career had been cut short, not so much of grief, as of outrage, rather as if certain lyrics of Rimbaud or Blake had been extinguished.

Driftwood

I found it
on the beach
in winter, the day
my marriage fell apart

the wind blew from Ireland
boring into our skulls
it jutted from shingle
bleached blade bone
honed sharp by sea

I held it close
a touchstone against
your white silence

—I want to go home, I said

tucking it inside
my oilskin like an
animal protected from
the cold

a hooded eagle
head rearing in
its death throes
the sinews of the neck
taut distended

where the grain darkens
into twists and knots
the hollow bowl forming
an empty eye

now it sits
on the marble mantelpiece
a work of art

Sue Hubbard

PRODUCED 2005 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

LETTERS

Footnote to a Murder

I RECENTLY received some promotional material from ENCOUNTER which listed the "categories" of subscribers who take your estimable journal (with pleasure, with instruction!). Among them were "architects, doctors, journalists", *et al.* You are being modest, or else are unaware how far your fame or notoriety spreads. I was recently reading the autobiography of Jean Harris, the famous schoolteacher who was found guilty of murdering her lover, the even-more-famous author of the Scarsdale Diet books, Dr Herman Tarnow.

For whatever use it may be—and maybe (as the saying on Madison Avenue goes) all publicity is good publicity so long as the name gets spelled right—I quote the relevant passage by Ms Harris about Dr Tarnow involving ENCOUNTER (*Strangers in Two Worlds*, Macmillan, 1986):

> "Both Hy and I had wonderfully eclectic collections of books. . . . I think he felt his reading time was wasted if he didn't finish a book knowing something specific he hadn't known before: the difference between the Sunnite and Shiite Moslems; the history of guerrilla warfare; the history of China; the origin of the Jewish tribes. This sort of thing excited his interest. . . . The one magazine he always read and enjoyed was ENCOUNTER, a British monthly. He used to mark things for me to be sure to read, and finally he just gave me a subscription."

I am sure that this passion for a periodical didn't figure in the *crime passionelle*. I have often over the years been similarly inspired to give a subscription to ENCOUNTER, and in not one recorded case has it ever proved fatal!

Still, as an historian, I want to put the above on the record.

LOUIS L. SNYDER
Emeritus Professor of History
City University of New York

New York City

A Medium's "Fraud"?

M IS QUITE CORRECT in stating ("Column", April 1987) that Robert Browning's poem "Mr Sludge, The Medium" was inspired by, rather than based on, Daniel Home.

However, in calling Home "fraudulent", *M* is making a presumption rather than stating a fact. Actually, there is no direct evidence that Home ever resorted to fraud. Yet, in the course of some twenty years, he gave seances at the rate of two or three a week before hundreds of different witnesses in several countries. Many detailed accounts of these seances have survived, some of them by investigators who, initially, were highly sceptical. These seances followed a standard course the climax of which was the levitation of a large table to several feet above the floor for a brief period (some of these tables are described as large enough to seat a dozen or more at dinner). Unlike most other mediums of that time he performed in good illumination. Since the seances were held in private houses and hotels, often at short notice, the possibility that Home could have insinuated some concealed machinery can safely be ruled out, the more so as the sitters were always free to search wherever they pleased.

How is one to account for this evidence? One suggestion that has been put forward is that the tables never left the ground but that Home was somehow able to induce his sitters to believe that they saw them rising. The idea was already current at that time and some sitters took special precautions to counteract any attempt by Home to influence them. But the weakness of this hypothesis is that unless it were effective for every single individual involved this approach would have been useless, and to make that assumption would be to credit Home with a power that was not only unique but was scarcely less miraculous than the alternative it was designed to avoid.

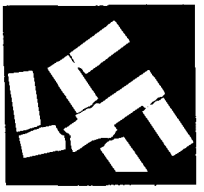
The shoddy tricks which Robert Browning attributed to the fictitious Mr Sludge belong to the stock-in-trade of the fraudulent mediums who abounded at that time. Home himself did much to expose these practices in his book *The Lights and Shadows of Spiritualism* (1877). Why Browning should have felt such an intense loathing for Home is something of a mystery. On the one occasion when Browning attended one of Home's seances he had no criticisms or complaints to make about the way it was conducted. It is known, however, that Browning resented his wife Elizabeth's interest in spiritualism and her admiration for Daniel Home. Of course *M* is not alone in thinking that Home was fraudulent, one could almost say that it has become an *idée reçue*. And yet the only grounds for suspicion are the inherent incredibility of the phenomena themselves and the fact that nothing comparable has been recorded in psychical research since Home's demise.

JOHN BELOFF

Edinburgh

The Battle of the Historians

An Answer to Josef Joffe—By GEORGE WATSON



IRONY WILL DO a lot for you, if you let it. But Josef Joffe ("The Battle of the Historians", ENCOUNTER, May) lets it do too much when he suggests Marx did not mean it literally when he preached the annihilation of the bourgeoisie. No author was ever less of an ironist, and Ernst Nolte's case for a causal connection between the idea of extermination in Marxism-Leninism and in Hitlerism is not "forced" at all. The issue is not literary metaphor but, literally, murder.

There may be evidence that neither Nolte nor Joffe, I suspect, has yet taken into account. I have mentioned some of it in my recent book *The Idea of Liberalism* (Macmillan). Mainly this:

1. Hitler often said he had read Marx and the Marxists, adding that he owed a lot to them. "I have learnt a great deal from Marxism", he told Hermann Rauschning soon after he seized power in January 1933,

> "as I do not hesitate to admit. The difference . . . is that I have put into practice what these peddlers and pen-pushers have timidly begun. The whole of National Socialism is based on it." (*Hitler Speaks*, 1939, p.185)

In his table-talk during the War, again, he called Stalin a genius; and he once commended Trotsky's memoirs as "brilliant". Even when young, as Walter Laqueur has shown in *Russia and Germany* (1965), he never saw Communism as the main enemy—rather as a rival. Albert Speer in *Spandau* (1976) tells how, at the height of the War, Hitler abused "that reactionary crew around Franco", telling Speer that when the War was won he would help the Communists to start the Spanish Civil War all over again, "with us on the opposite side".

2. Marx and Engels publicly demanded racial as well as class extermination, though this aspect of their teaching, once regarded as commonplace, has been carefully forgotten. The chief (but by no means the only) document here is Engels's "Der magyarische Kampf" in Marx's journal the *Neue Rheinische Zeitung* for January-February 1849.

PRODUCED 2005 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

There he argued that the extermination of entire reactionary peoples in Europe would be necessary when socialism triumphed. Hitler could easily have read this article in his Munich year of 1913-14—it was collected in Franz Mehring's *Aus dem literarischen Nachlass von Marx, Engels und Lassalle* (1902). It was approvingly echoed by Stalin in *The Foundations of Leninism* (1924), which appeared in Vienna translated into German during Hitler's imprisonment that year in the Landsberg. Engels had called "reactionary" peoples like Bretons, Basques and Serbs "*Völkerabfall*"— racial trash—and predicted their annihilation as whole peoples. Not surprising, then, if Hitler told his friends he was indebted to the ideas of Marxism.

3. In *Mein Kampf* (1924) Hitler called his own killing programme a reply to Lenin's. In the eleventh chapter, "People and Race", he attacked the Bolsheviks for having already begun their policy of extermination in Russia, "the great and final revolution" that would fit people for "their fate as slaves under a lasting despotism" by killing off their natural leaders. And he vowed revenge: "The death of the victim is followed, sooner or later, by the death of the vampire." Nazi extermination was openly a reply to Communist extermination.

I HAVE ARGUED in *The Idea of Liberalism* that the documentary evidence for Marxist genocide has been actively suppressed in our own times. The Soviets, it now seem likely, used gas-chambers before the Nazis ever did, and had abundant opportunities during the joint occupation of Poland in 1939-41 to inform their Nazi allies about in-camp techniques. One or two of the reviewers last year sagely remarked that modern Marxists would refuse to give me an argument here, since revelations about Marxist genocide could only embarrass them; and they have been proved right. But in the century between the 1840s and the 1940s, evidence of socialist or communist genocide is plentiful. It was proclaimed by Marx and Engels, more than once and acclaimed in England by George Bernard Shaw and H. G. Wells in this century.

I suspect our grandparents would have been surprised that *we* should be surprised by an aspect of Victorian socialism once taken for granted. There are natural connections, after all, between the doctrine of equality and the killing-off of unequals like misfits, incurables, dissidents and ethnic minorities: you make society equal by killing off those who are distinct. It is not the only way, and no one would wish to argue that socialism is inevitably committed to genocide. But it *was* so committed, for about a hundred years.

I do not think we should lightly dismiss Ernst Nolte's proposition of a causal link between Marx and Hitler. Hitler did not. "Where have we seen the idea of a 'Final Solution' before?", Nolte asked a Harvard seminar fifteen years ago. It was a good question. And when he answered it by citing the works of Marx, it was a good answer.

If Dr Joffe can show any pre-1933 source for genocide acknowledged by Hitler that is not socialist, or explain why Hitler told his friends that Nazism had its basis in Marxism, he will have contributed something of note to "the Battle of the Historians".

Irony, on the other hand, will get him nowhere.

GEORGE WATSON
St John's College
Cambridge

Reply

IN HIS COMMENT ON my "Battle of the Historians", George Watson has served up some interesting quotes. But I do not see how they buttress the key argument by German revisionist historians like Ernst Nolte. His argument is threefold. The Marxists invented the idea of a "final solution"; the Bolsheviks were first to implement it; and, in the words of Nolte, "the so-called [sic] annihilation of the Jews during the Third Reich" was a "reaction or a distorted copy, but not a singular event or the original".[1]

Nolte's real purpose is nothing less than the recasting of 20th-century history. And so he asks: Did Auschwitz "perhaps grow out of a past that would not pass away?" Did Hitler, in other words, merely do to the Jews what the "Red Terror" had done to the "Whites", inflicting an "Asiatic deed" on the Jews for fear of suffering the same fate at the hands of the Communist monster? Yes, he concludes, "there is probably a causal nexus".

In other words, Nolte constructs a monstrous piece of "logic": *A* (Hitler), being afraid of *B* (the menace of Bolshevism), slaughtered *C* (the Jews) in pre-emptive self-defence. Given this argument, Mr Watson's quotes are interesting, but irrelevant to the support of Nolte.

Mr Watson claims that Hitler "never saw Communism as the main enemy". If so, what do we call Hitler's war of conquest against Soviet Russia? An act on "friendship", or "peripheral enmity"? But assume this argument for the sake of discussion. Why, then, would Nolte and friends argue that Hitler did unto the Jews what he fantasised the Bolsheviks would do unto him? Fear of the Bolsheviks is the "causal nexus" that leads straight to the gas chambers in Nolte's revisionist construction, and such a murderous response would surely require a pretty fearful and first-rate enemy. So if George Watson is right, how can Ernst Nolte be right, too?

GEORGE WATSON'S SECOND KEY POINT is that Hitler "called his own killing programme a reply to Lenin's". Even if Mr Watson is right (which he asserts rather than proves), why the Jews? Should not the "reply" have been targeted against the perpetrators rather than the innocents?

Finally, Mr Watson quotes Hitler as having "learned a great deal from Marxism". What, pray tell, did Hitler learn there? How to write the Nuremberg race laws? how to measure skull widths in order to certify "Aryanness"? how to lay out gas chambers with an "optimal through-put"?

The Talmudic sages said: "'For example' is not evidence." And neither can a fistful of out-of-context quotes overturn a vast body of research that leads to the same conclusion with tiresome regularity: Hitler's war of extermination against the Jews was a *specific* and *autonomous* event which simply cannot be explained by the mayhem of the Bolsheviks or Hitler's fear of them.

THOUGH MR WATSON evidently does not cherish irony, I cannot resist adding this in conclusion. Many Germans have gleefully pointed to British concentration camps built during the Boer War as an historic "first". To which a British reader responded in a letter to *The Times* some years ago: "It is true that we built them first, but the Germans certainly improved upon the original design." To call Hitler and Eichmann copy-cats is like calling the War of Jenkin's Ear a model for World War II.

JOSEF JOFFE
Munich

Gorbachov's "Revolution"

WILL GORBACHOV "make it"? Can he change the system? Every visitor who returns from the Soviet Union is asked for his impressions, and they are various and often contradictory. In any case what Gorbachov has achieved is to drop the half-century-old mask of the so-called "Achievements of Socialism" and shed public light on the terrible weaknesses of the Soviet economy. And how can he go on to operate a useless economic system which only ticks over with the most gigantic and debilitating efforts of men and machines? and at the same time to transform it by realising its

[1] "Between Myth and Revisionism: The Third Reich in the Perspective of the 1980s", in Hans W. Koch, ed., *Aspects of the Third Reich* (Macmillan, 1985).

PRODUCED 2005 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ultimate potential for welfare and prosperity? Wherein lie the "basic difficulties" or, if you will, the "fundamental contradictions"? I think the essential economic factors have not been sufficiently emphasised in the current discussion.

The Soviet Union could not, for a long time now, be described in terms of the old Economic Autarchy; for it has in many ways been tied into the outside world, including both the West and the developing nations. Through the sale of its gold, oil, and gas, it has many-sided connections; also through arms and weapons sales, and above all its purchases of grain and advanced machinery. Its credit-worthiness has never raised any problems, not even in the 1980s when Poland and Romania began to have "banking wobbles" (and there was talk about the East German *DDR*); the USSR held fast to its reputation as a reputable debtor. To be sure, Soviet credit policies, and its foreign economic policy as a whole is a "State Secret"; but nothing remains entirely undisclosed. Sooner or later Western observers have been able to draw a true picture of the extent of Moscow's efforts to accommodate the USSR to Western practices and opportunities, always of course within the restrictive limits of the Plan. Whenever the opportunity and need require it, Moscow can have access to the Western capital markets on the basis of its repayments record and its gigantic natural resources.

WILL A possible turn in foreign-policy emphases affect economists' estimates of the enormous expense of armaments deliveries? This remains to be seen. More certain is that the "demands" being made on the countries who have been buying the arms, from India to Ethiopia, are in large part headed for "write-offs".

What about the "contradictory tensions" between the failures of the Soviet system in agriculture and the compulsion year-after-year to finance tremendous purchases of grain? The losses (transport, storage, etc.) are vast. Between 1980 and 1982 the annual burden has been estimated at five billion dollars. If Gorbachov doesn't manage to change, reform, restructure, or whatever, the hitherto wasteful and useless agricultural policy of the Bolshevik Party—now listening to strange words of new theories, but stiff, unbending and arthritic in its old practices—then (as economists estimate) every second export-dollar will be devoted to agricultural importations. These astronomical sums, then, would not be available for the urgent modernisation of Soviet industry. The phase of high profits out of their oil business is over: and gold has become a sideline. Well, they can always turn to borrowing and piling up debts. But this kind of policy will not solve the problems of the USSR—long known to critical Western observers, and now exposed in the full light of day by Gorbachov's somewhat desperate "openness" about economic waste, corruption, and pervasive incompetence.

The master of the Kremlin is in a double bind. He cannot reform "bit-by-bit", for everything is related; but he cannot (although he talks about it freely) really reform everything at once. In his speech at Kharabask (last summer, in a ridiculously unproductive factory), he even raised the spectre of revolution. Not "patch-work reformism" was on the agenda of the day, but *revolution*!

Older Marxist-Leninists used to call this *counter-revolution*, and proceeded to make an orthodox and appropriate political response. They may still do so again.

GÖTZ H. HERBERT

Frankfurt-am-Main

Prediction

MY HEART leapt up when I beheld Mr Edward Pearce in your issue for September/October 1985:

> ". . . the era of Margaret Thatcher, which has many achievements to its name, is drawing to a close. I am convinced that she will not contest the next General Election. . . . I rather think that she will leave long before that term's expiry, indeed that she will not be Prime Minister when the Conservatives meet for their annual Conference in October 1986. Either she will jump or she will be pushed."

At any rate, Mr Pearce's ill-starred prediction gave me an illusory feeling of cheerfulness for quite a few months, so I am grateful for that.

J. G. WATSON

Oxford

ALAS, I feel just like Mr Watson. You win some, you lose some. But if the lady can survive Westland which came *after* my doom-saying piece, then the laws of political gravity have been suspended. I may give up predictions and go over to hoping.

EDWARD PEARCE

London

Criticising "Shoah"

PAUL COATES evidently didn't think much of the film *Shoah* [ENCOUNTER, June]. In the end a critic's preference is his own and cannot be gainsaid. Absolute values like right and wrong don't usually obtain in matters of aesthetic taste. And yet Dr Coates's view of the film is so overwhelmingly different from my own that I find myself picking up my pen. Dare I hope that my experience, not Coates's, is the one that most people who have seen it share about this masterpiece? Dr Coates's whole argument seems to me perverse: excessively defensive (about the Poles), and emotionally obtuse (about the extraordinary truth of the Jews' experience).

The film's director Claude Lanzmann is not, of course, an unbiased polite interviewer in the best BBC manner. He is a man with his fair share of anger; but also (equally evidently, I should have thought) a man who has thought deeply and sincerely about these things: not a buffoon and not a scoundrel. If his manner is frequently brusque, ironic, overweening, there is the fact to counterbalance this, that his camera is unbelievably patient. (And this is why, among other reasons, it is important for the film to be so long.)

Dr Coates seems to me to miss entirely what is the film's single most striking aesthetic quality, that is, the dialectic it contains between words and images. Time and again the interviewee will be saying something, the true "temperature" of which can only be sensed through the subtlest facial or bodily signs.

SO, IN THE MATTER of the famous throat-slitting gesture, you have to see the film yourself to make up your own mind whether the person who is explaining it to the interviewer is doing so in a manner that is gloating and stupid, or in a manner that on the contrary sees its possible deep poignancy and ambiguity. Was the gesture a *warning* or an *obscenity*? It could surely have been either, and must often have been both. But the film resists "saying".

It doesn't "say" about many other things, too. *Shoah* seems to me profoundly humane, undeterminist, anti-sociological in its sense of the variety, complexity and finally indeed the opacity of individual human motivation. Has such and such a man (a Nazi) repented of his crimes? Maybe he has, maybe not. Look and see. Does this other man (a Pole, a peasant) show remorse for his collusion? (*Was* it in fact collusion?) Are those real tears that he weeps, or tears of self-indulgence? As in the very finest documentaries, a profound clarity of structure (a clarity I would wish to call, going back to the length of the film, "musical") coincides with portraits of individual destinies that are far too complicated and human to be summed up didactically or knowingly.

That the film *has* got an overall thesis, or point of view, is true. The Poles were not always as compunctious as they should have been in human soli-

PRODUCED 2005 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

darity with their fellow citizens the Jews. Would Dr Coates care to deny this? It is manifestly true. But the viewer misses the point if he feels that the film is "merely" an indictment of the Poles; or rather, if he muddles up *that* indictment with the far graver and (of course) infinitely more deserved indictment of the whole monstrous German experiment. Dr Coates suggests a "formalism" in Claude Lanzmann's "excessive", "repetitive" shots of railways. But it is not formalism. Trains are the motif that holds the film together *Shoah* is about the transport of the Jews to the death camps. Can we ever think deeply enough or indignantly enough about the cold-blooded way this was planned and carried out?

Yet Lanzmann's moral anger is never strident. The film, throughout its interviews and meditations on landscape, has a terrible calm and objectivity: in the end a kind of exaltation. Dr Coates is allowed to harbour his scepticism. The rest of us will continue to be amazed and awestruck at the depth of the film's confrontation with evil, and the beauty of its countervailing human hope.

MARK LE FANU

London

Reply

I AM INTRIGUED by the terms and tactics of Mark Le Fanu's criticism of my piece on *Shoah*. He depicts me as a solitary sceptic, perversely perched out on a limb—certainly not one of "us", the unspecified group of the right-minded whom Mr Le Fanu delegates himself to represent. It is ironic that he should write of the complexity of Claude Lanzmann's film while in fact ignoring its real complexity, its flawed, uneven state. It is this that has generated the considerable controversy that has surrounded the film. I am not a lone dissenter but think myself in good company—alongside Pauline Kael, various correspondents (Jewish and Gentile) to *The New York Review of Books*, and contributors to the Paris *Kultura* (a periodical whose orientation closely resembles that of ENCOUNTER). Lanzmann's film has extraordinary moments, but it is marred by a questionable self-righteousness, which I am far from the first to point out. This flaw particularly afflicts the first half of the film. Contrary to Mr Le Fanu's assertion, I do not tar the film with a single brush—as he whitewashes it—but distinguish between its sections, insisting upon the greater power and legitimacy of the second section.

Mr Le Fanu is right, however, to note that Lanzmann's film is opposed to "saying". Its procedure is rather one of insinuation, including the implied thesis that the Nazis constructed their concentration camps in Poland because an apparently all-pervasive Polish anti-Semitism rendered it a fit location for them. Lanzmann's pursuit of leitmotifs leads to an apparently objective juxtaposition of scenes that is really loaded. (Like Mr Le Fanu, who both judges the sincerity of others' tears and speaks of the complex opacity of human behaviour, Lanzmann seeks to have things both ways: combining a direct expression of righteous anger with the indirections of a musical method of composition, the result being anger's diversion into insinuation and irritation.)

Sometimes, however, the loaded charge backfires. Thus, when several Poles remark that the engines on the Treblinka transports were at the back of the trains, and Rudolf Vrba is then shown saying that the engine was at the front, the film's tendency to discredit the words of Poles is such that for a moment one reads Vrba's words as invalidating those of the earlier speakers . . . until one realises—if one *does* realise—that he is talking of the procedures at Auschwitz. The montage method tends to blur the differences between places. The result is an intermittent imprecision Lanzmann surely cannot have intended.

Where my pieces refers to specific moments in the film—such as the one analysed above—Mr Le Fanu prefers to pontificate exaltedly about "the film as a whole". He asks if I would care to deny that the Poles were often less compunctious towards the Jews than they ought to have been. Not only do I *not* deny this, I speak in my piece of the moral idiocy of some of the peasants Lanzmann interviews. There is however, one fact that the film's strange abbreviation of Jan Karski's testimony obscures: the Poles were not the only ones lacking in this respect. The Western powers to whom he appealed also failed to react. (Karski, who gave his interview on the understanding that it would perpetuate the complete facts, has objected to this abbreviation; perhaps if Lanzmann had told him, as he has informed interviewers, that what he was making was *not* a documentary, Karski would have declined to speak.)

MR LE FANU states that I object to Lanzmann's "formalism" and "excessive" use of images of trains. His use of inverted commas implies a direct quotation from my piece, whereas he is (carelessly, or deliberately?) putting jargon words into my mouth. He also implies that my criticism of *Shoah* is evidence of insensitivity to the fate of the Jews under Hitler's régime. (Lanzmann himself implies that to criticise his film is to condemn oneself—an element of moral blackmail pointed out in *The New Yorker* by Pauline Kael, whose reward for her careful criticisms of the film was a wild accusation of anti-Semitism in *The Village Voice*).

If I criticise *Shoah*, however, it is because it blunts our apprehension of the complexity of events, either through its excisions (Lanzmann declined to use Marek Edelman's testimony, for it conflicted with the bias of his work) or through its repetitions. (One can, for instance, realise that trains are the film's leitmotif and still find their repeated presenting numbing—the same thought repeated automatically and ad infinitum.) The final words of my piece are: "the monotony of its dissemination dulls our awareness of the fearsome reality it reflects"—reflects, I should add, as in a glass darkly; for the monotony is that of a point of view that *denies* complexity.

PAUL COATES

Department of English
McGill University
Montréal

Inflationary Hollywood

TED HUMES (Letters, February) incorrectly corrects Anthony Hartley, who was also wrong when he said Senator Everett Dirksen, and not Senator Barry Goldwater remarked: "A billion here and a billion there, and pretty soon you're talking real money. . . ."

Almost 50 years ago in Hollywood, Hunt Stromberg, a distinguished producer at Metro-Goldwyn-Meyer, expressed his dismay when his art director and scenic designer presented him with drawings for some grandiose sets for a forthcoming spectacular film. Mr Stromberg was mightily impressed.

"How much will these cost?" he asked. When he learned the sets would bring the cost of the picture $100,000 above budget, he cried, "A hundred thousand here, a hundred thousand there—pretty soon amounts like that add up! . . .

The story is true, as Mr Stromberg admitted to me when I was working on a screen play for him. It takes on appropriate power if we remember that in those days a Coke cost a nickel, a hamburger a dime, a man's suit $65, and a postcard one penny (today it's 14 cents). As for a ticket to a movie, it cost from 25 to 50 cents. Very few films were budgeted above one million dollars.

LEO ROSTEN

New York City

PRINTED IN GREAT BRITAIN BY

Thamesmouth Printing Group,
17-21 Hovefields Avenue, Basildon, Essex

PRODUCED 2005 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Life & Letters Today

London

BRIEF ENCOUNTER: **Edwina Currie (Health Minister in Mrs Thatcher's Cabinet) has been campaigning hard. She's been wearing the same dress for three days. "Clean underwear, though!" she emphasises as she strides along.**

She likes mentioning things like underwear. It is part of her Northern candour, her devil-may-care, blunt-talkin' image. There can't be many other MPs who keep a Brie in the fridge and speed up its softness by putting it in the microwave.

Yesterday she joined a charity walk for a couple of miles on her "patch" as she calls her constituency. She likes to say hello to one and all, especially children, and more especially children who are close to photographers.

Passing a field, she even shouts "Hello cows! Hello sheep!", making clear that her chatter is free to all, and that no one could rightly call her cowist or sheepist.

"After working 100 hours in my first week as a Junior Minister, I thought, '. . . this for a lark!'," she says. Too much unnecessary verbiage to plough through. First off, she cancelled the Ministry subscription to *Encounter* and *The Spectator*, switching to *Woman's Own* and *Living* magazine. "They have a lot of articles worth reading, and they're what the *people* read."

She has, she says, always been interested in people.

THE TIMES

Belgium

FRENCH EMPIRE: *A group of French-speaking Belgians, claiming that their identity as Walloons is increasingly threatened by Belgium's Dutch-speaking Flemings, have formed a "Walloon Movement for the Return to France". They hope to organise a referendum in which they will choose to become part of France.*

Asked what would happen if the French were to refuse the annexation of Wallonia, a spokesman said, "In that case, we will annex France."

INTERNATIONAL HERALD TRIBUNE

New York City

INJUSTICE: **Max Hastings, in his article on "Reagan's America", has Scott Fitzgerald saying "*The rich are different from you and I*". Scott Fitzgerald, though a bad speller, was an exquisite grammarian, and he would never have said anything of the sort [writes Professor Arthur Schlesinger Jr.]. What he said, of course (or what Hemingway said he said) was "*The very rich are different from you and me*". I do not know whether Max Hastings is a "from you and I" man himself or whether unconscious anti-Americanism leads him to charge Americans with language abuse; but he has done an injustice to an elegant American writer.**

SUNDAY TIMES

New York City

LYRICAL ZEALOTS: *The members of the United Methodist Church's Hymnal committee are not bomb-throwers, but their decision to delete* **"Onward Christian Soldiers"** *and* **"The Battle Hymn of the Republic"** *from the Methodist hymnal was the liturgical equivalent of changing the formula for Coke. Wisely, they have now reversed themselves.*

The committee originally said that "militaristic" references made the two hymns inappropriate. That is a commendable concern, one to which religious people could not be indifferent. But, by that logic, Methodists might also refrain from reading the Bible, which fairly bristles with bellicose references, many of them approving and more vivid and graphic than those in the hymns.

"Onward Christian Soldiers", *goes the hymn,* **"marching as to war".** *The* **"as"** *is frequently mistaken for* **"off",** *and so the song is mistaken for a call to physical battle. In fact it is an exhortation to fervor for a spiritual cause. What do such lyrical zealots propose be done about the Salvation* **Army***?*

NEW YORK TIMES

Frankfurt-am-Main

MILKY WAY: **How fresh should "fresh milk" be? Some guarantees to the customer indicate six-days-old. But a case in the German high courts forbade the "fresh" label on milk that has gone through the processes of homogenisation and pasteurisation. The milk-and-food people appealed the case, and the judges ruled that it all depends on whether during those processes the quality of the milk has not depreciated (or significantly so). But does the pasteurisation alter the quality of milk freshness? The West German court (*Aktenzeichen* 3 C 27.85) indicated that its judges would look at this and give the matter further consideration.**

FRANKFURTER ALLGEMEINE ZEITUNG

London

FISHY STORY: *Roy Hattersley's former secretary yesterday dropped her claim for unfair dismissal and accepted a cash settlement from Labour's deputy leader. Miss Margaret Pryor, 51, of Islington, North London, had been Mr Hattersley's constituency secretary in the House of Commons for eight years. No reason was given for her dismissal.*

Last September she is said to have embarrassed him by correcting in print an article he had written in "The Guardian". Mr Hattersley claimed in the article that there were no fish beginning with an **A***. But Miss Pryor wrote in a letter to the paper:*

> **"Has he not heard of the Pacific's answer to overdone, reheated Yorkshire pudding—*abalone*?"**

DAILY MAIL

London

FOREIGN LANGUAGES: **It is quite startling to be made aware of how different the English and American languages are, not so much in the way that they are written but in the way they are spoken. For instance, Studs Terkel's memoir "Talking to Myself", which is oral in essence, might at times be in a foreign language.**

Here the British reader has to struggle in deep linguistic waters. Sometimes I almost gave up the effort [David Holloway writes]. What, for instance is, or was, "the Uneeda Biscuit Boy"? I have no idea. This is, surely, something from a foreign language, but would a Chicagoan get an immediate picture of the Bisto Kids? As I say, the language is different.

DAILY TELEGRAPH

PRODUCED 2005 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

The University of Chicago Press
congratulates

LOUIS DUMONT

on receiving the 1987
Prix Tocqueville.

This prize, awarded every two years
by an international jury of scholars,
honors reflective works of liberal inspiration.

Louis Dumont, an anthropologist known for his writings on
the Indian caste system and the genesis of modern economic thought,
is honored this year for having notably illuminated the importance
of the idea of individualism for the understanding of Western society.

The University of Chicago Press
is privileged to have published his major works:

ESSAYS ON INDIVIDUALISM
Modern Ideology in Anthropological Perspective

AFFINITY AS A VALUE
Marriage Alliance in South India, with Comparative Essays on Australia

FROM MANDEVILLE TO MARX
The Genesis and Triumph of Economic Ideology

HOMO HIERARCHICUS
The Caste System and Its Implications

For information on these or any of the thousands of our other books in print, write to:
126 Buckingham Palace Road, London SW1W 9SD, England, or to:
5801 Ellis Avenue, Chicago, Illinois 60637, U.S.A.

PRODUCED 2005 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED